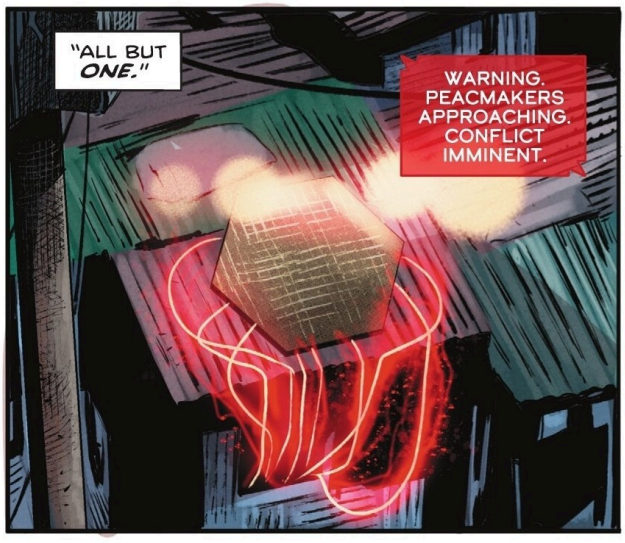
SUPERMAN
2
$4.99
US
AGES 13+

NOW.
GUUGH!
YOU THINK WE'RE STUPID?! THOSE DIAMONDS DIDN'T MINE THEMSELVES!
SOMEONE AMONG YOU ENJOYS BREAKING THE PEACE!
WHO IS IT?!

AFTER EVERYTHING LAZARUS HAS DONE FOR YOU ANIMALS.
LAZARUS MEANS LIFE!
BUT MAYBE FOR YOU...IT OUGHTA MEAN--
SIR, HEAD COUNT COMPLETE. ALL WORKERS REPORTED FOR THEIR SHIFT TODAY.


"ALL BUT ONE."
WARNING. PEACMAKERS APPROACHING. CONFLICT IMMINENT.

SOLAR CHARGING SUSPENDED.
INSTIGATING WAKE-UP PROCEDURES.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN GONE.

ON TO THE NEXT MINE. NEXT CORPORATE PIG FARM OR SWEATSHOP FACTORY.
EVACUATE THE AREA IMMEDIATELY!
LAZARUS MEANS OBEDIENCE!
YEARS OF RUNNING. ALL ACROSS THIS PLANET.
FROM THE JUNGLE TO THE BIG WATERS TO...WHATEVER YOU CALL THOSE PLACES THAT ARE NOTHING BUT SAND... AND IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME.
MOVE! EVERYBODY OUT! NOW!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! THERE ARE CHILDREN HERE!
ALWAYS MISERY.
ALWAYS LAZARUS.
EXCEPT THIS TIME, I'VE LEFT MYSELF WEAK AND SUN-STARVED.
YOU INSIDE! COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!
DO IT OR YOU WILL BE SHOT!
DREAMING OF A TIME SO LONG AGO...
...WHEN I STILL KNEW WHO I WAS.
KAL-EL!
HUH?

WHAT THE HELL IS--
BRAKKOOM
CONTACT! CONTACT! OPEN FIRE!
MAYBE IT'S FOR THE BEST I HADN'T ALREADY LEFT. BECAUSE AFTER YEARS OF WATCHING THESE PEOPLE TREAT THE POOREST AND LOWEST AMONG THEM AS LITTLE MORE THAN CATTLE...

...I'VE GOTTEN TIRED OF RUNNING.

INTERESTING.
LIKE THE OTHER LAZARUS CORP FORCES WE'VE ENCOUNTERED, THEIR WEAPONS AND ARMOR INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY **NOT NATIVE** TO THIS GALAXY.
WILL THEY *LIVE* IF I HIT THEM?
YES, BUT I STILL ADVISE AGAINST--
--THAT.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GONNA SAY, SOL, BUT WE'RE NOT LEAVING UNTIL THE MINERS ARE *SAFE!*
ROUNDS INEFFECTIVE.
ADJUSTING AMMUNITION.
PRINTING MAXIMUM CALIBER.
KAL-EL, THIS IS A PLANET OF COMBUSTION ENGINES, FANATICAL RELIGIONS, AND THERMONUCLEAR WEAPONS.
THESE PEOPLE ARE **NEVER** SAFE.

AND NEITHER ARE YOU IF YOU INSIST ON EXERTING YOURSELF IN THIS MANNER.
YOUR SOLAR-ENERGY LEVELS ARE QUITE DEPLETED.
THESE WORKERS ARE IN DANGER!
JOIN THE ONE A MEN
AND IT'S MY FAULT!
AND IT'S MY FAULT!
AND IT'S MY FAULT!
ALL I DID WAS TRY TO HELP!
GAAIRRGGH!
MY GOD... THE BOY WHO SPOKE IN WHISPERS.
IF LAZARUS WON'T PAY YOU, YOU SHOULD TAKE THE DIAMONDS TO SOMEONE WHO WILL.
BUT PLEASE, JUST GET EVERYONE OUT OF HERE BEFORE--
KAL-EL, YOU MUST LEAVE NOW.
KAL-EL!

"ATTENTION PEACEMAKERS! CALL OFF THE *REAPER DRONES,* YOU BUCKET-HEADED HALF-WITS!
THAT'S AN ORDER FROM *LAZARUS COMMAND!*
THE *DIRECTOR HIMSELF* WANTS THE TARGET *ALIVE!*
THIS IS THE *PHENOMENA FIELD TEAM,* INBOUND!
LAZARUS
AGENTS, TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.
PHYSICAL ABILITIES BEYOND...GOOD LORD, BEYOND ALL HUMAN SCALE.
DEFINITELY THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE BOTSWANA AND DHARAVI INCIDENTS.
LIKE BEFORE, THERE'S SOME KIND OF *INTERFERENCE* WITH THE IMAGES.
IT'S THE *SUIT.* IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, YOU CAN SEE IT SHIFTING, CHANGING SHAPE, LIKE *LIVING ARMOR,* PROTECTING HIM.
AND SOMETIMES... I'D SWEAR HE'S *TALKING* TO IT.
GOOD EYE, AGENT.
"ALL RIGHT, BE READY TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING AND GUNNING, PEOPLE!"
KAL-EL, NO... YOU KNOW YOU CANNOT CONTROL YOUR--
GGRREERRRGGH!

HIS EYES! WHAT'S HE DOING WITH HIS--
GAAAGH!
AAAIIRRRGH!
HRRRRHH!
ENOUGH!
SOL, SHUT ME DOWN!
KAL...
...IT IS MY MISSION TO PROTECT YOU.
TO GUARD THE LAST LIVING VESTIGE OF THE HOUSE OF EL.
SO I MUST URGE YOU... YET AGAIN...

DO NOT ENGAGE.
DO NOT RISK YOUR LIFE FOR THESE PEOPLE.
LEAVE THIS PLACE.
RETURN TO THE SHADOWS.
PLEASE.
YOU MUST NEVER FORGET THE LESSON OF KRYPTON.
SOME WORLDS SIMPLY CANNOT BE SAVED.
NOT FROM THEMSELVES.

LAZARUS MEANS PEACE
HOW'S MY DRIVING?

FIELD TEAM! GO, GO, GO!

MAYBE... YOU'RE RIGHT, SOL.

THIS WAS...
THIS WAS A BAD IDEA.
AND I DON'T REALLY... FEEL SO GREAT.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE--

KLANK

THIS IS *AGENT LANE!* SUSPECT IN CUSTODY!
MOVE AND I FRY YOUR FACE!
"SUPERMAN"!

THE NEVADA DESERT.
LAZARUS CORP R&D DEPARTMENT
WELL NOW...
...WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
AAAAAAAARRGGGH!
GGGAAIIGGHH!
A SCRUMPTIOUS NEW TOY.
WONDER WHERE YOU CAME FROM?
KILL US! PLEASE KILL US!

EARTH.
BRAZIL.
NOW.
KAL-EL...
GET ON YOUR KNEES!
YOU'RE BEING DETAINED BY THE AUTHORITY OF LAZARUS CORP!
ON YOUR DAMN KNEES, NOW!
FIQUE DE JOELHOS!
KAL-EL, YOU MUST FLEE.
HEY!
OKAY, LET ME JUST...

I CAN'T BREAK THIS.
PUT YOUR HAND BEHIND YOUR BACK!
WHAT ARE THESE...THESE CHUFFS *MADE* OF?
CUFFS. KAL, YOU ARE WEAKENED. YOU ARE VULNERABLE HERE.
I'M *CHUFFED* TO HER! WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, SOL? *RIP HER ARM--*
ZZKT
GNNGH!
I WILL DEAL WITH THE HANDCUFFS.
THIS IS *AGENT LANE!* TARGET'S SUIT IS *REACTIVE!* IT'S CRAWLING UP MY *ARM!*
JUST DON'T HURT HER.
KAL, I AM NOT THE ONE YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT.
FREEZE! IN THE NAME OF LAZARUS!

LET HER GO, SCUMBAG!
SUSPECT IS RESISTING ARREST!
HE'S ATTACKING LANE!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?! HE SAID HE'S GONNA HURT HER!
LAZARUS MEANS PEACE - HOW'S MY DRIVING?
LIGHT HIS ASS UP!
ZZKT
ZZKT
ZZKT

LET ME GO! GET THIS THING OFF ME!
DID SHE FORGET SHE'S THE ONE WHO CHUFFED ME?!
FASCINATING. THIS METAL RE-FORMS ITSELF AS QUICKLY AS I CAN SEVER IT. THIS WILL TAKE SOME TIME.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME! I CAN'T DO THIS FOR--
GAAGH!
ZZKT
STOP DOING THAT!
OH, SO NOW YOU'RE TALKING TO ME!
YES! BECAUSE YOU'RE MAKING IT VERY DIFFICULT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE!
LAZARUS DOESN'T WANT YOU DEAD!
JUST ON YOUR KNEES!
DO IT! AND THIS'LL ALL BE OVER!
THE CHUFFS?
CUFFS, AND NOT YET.
THEN USE THE DUST TO HOLD ON TO HER.
HEY, TALK TO ME, PAL! I'M RIGHT HERE! I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP YOU!
DON'T LET THIS TEAR HER IN HALF.
WHAT?!

HOLY HELL, HE'S FLYING!
HEY, KEEP THIS CHANNEL CLEAR OF GRAB ASS! ACT LIKE PEACEMAKERS!
UNDERSTOOD. TARGET IS, AH... AIRBORNE.
REQUESTING PERMISSION TO ENGAGE.
AAAAAAAAAAHHH!
LAZARUS

PERMISSION GRANTED. BUT THE DIRECTOR WANTS THE TARGET INTACT.
THE BRAINIAC SYSTEM SUGGESTS CHEM ROUNDS, LEVEL ELEVEN.
WILL DO. THOUGH I CAN'T GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF THE AGENT.
NOBODY'S ASKING YOU TO, PEACEMAKER.
COPY THAT. LAZARUS MEANS LIFE.
PEACE AT ALL COSTS
PEACE AT ALL COSTS
SOL!
I SEE IT.
LAZARUS
BOOM

KABLAM
ZZKT
UUNGH!
THIS IS AGENT LANE. SUSPECT LEAPED DUE EAST, APPROXIMATELY EIGHT MILES, TO THE TOWN OF--
JAM HER TRANSMISSION.
ALREADY DONE.

I JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE. *SEVERAL* TIMES. AND YOU WANT TO *ARREST* ME FOR IT?
NO, YOU WILLFULLY *ENDANGERED* MY LIFE BY TRYING TO ESCAPE LAWFUL CUSTODY, WHICH YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO.

YOU ENDANGER *EVERYONE* BY BEING...WHATEVER THE HELL IT IS YOU ARE. WHAT *ARE* YOU?
JUST ANOTHER CHILD OF THE *DIRT,* TRYING TO GET BY.
RIGHT, SO YOU'RE A HIPPIE WHO'S BULLETPROOF AND CAN JUMP REALLY FAR.
IS IT THE *SUIT* THAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL? WHO'S *SOL?* PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW.

SINCE WHEN DOES LAZARUS CORP GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANYONE'S *RIGHTS?*
WE'RE ALL JUST A BUNCH OF LIVESTOCK TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU.
YOU DON'T *KNOW* ANY PEOPLE LIKE ME, SUNSHINE, BELIEVE ME.
ARROGANT. CARES ONLY ABOUT *HERSELF.*

ANGRY AT ANYONE YOU THINK ISN'T AS SMART AS YOU, WHICH IS USUALLY *EVERYONE* WHO OPENS THEIR MOUTH IN YOUR VICINITY.
YOU'RE EVERYTHING THAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOUR PLANET.

MY PLANET, HUH?
STOP TALKING, KAL-EL. STOP TALKING RIGHT NOW.
SHE'S NOT WORTH TALKING TO ANYWAY.
WOULD YOU GET THESE CUFFS OFF ALREADY?
SO... WHAT'S *YOUR* PLANET?

BOOM

EVERYONE! GET OUT OF THE STREETS!
GET SOMEWHERE SAFE!*
DO YOU SEE?! THIS IS WHAT LAZARUS THINKS OF US!
THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT YOUR PLAYTHINGS!
*TRANSLATED FROM PORTUGUESE --ED.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE OF STEEL!
THOOM
THIS IS HELITANK BRAVO! WE'RE HIT! WE'RE GOING DOWN!
OH NO.

HAIL
AAAAARRRGGGH!
THE SUNSTONE DUST WILL SHIELD YOU.
NEVER MIND ME. JUST GO.
LAZARUS
Lazarus Field Agent After-Action Report: Lajes Creek Incident.
My first thought was that it had to be the suit.
But while the subject's advanced battle suit does display otherworldly properties, possibly including some level of sentience…
…after direct observation, this agent can say with profound certainty…

…it isn't the suit.
This Superman is plenty super all on his own.
The full extent of subject's powers remains uncharted.
It is my impression that even he does not fully understand the limits of his abilities.
As if this is all relatively new to him as well.
In some ways, Superman is very much still a boy, one who hasn't yet fully deciphered…who he is.
In other ways, he is every bit a man.
With an ethos that seems… unshakable.

IT'S OKAY. DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DUST.
Subject switches from a shy, soft-spoken demeanor to a more confident, commanding presence, depending on circumstance.
IT CAN TREAT YOUR WOUNDS. NOW STAND BACK.
Without either facet coming across as an affectation.
This feels like a man who cannot help but be earnest.
Who could never lie… even if he needed to.
UUUGH.
We know from the other sightings that he has traveled the globe. He speaks multiple languages.
But somehow he still has the air of a lost child.
Of a life in some way interrupted.
Of a son without a home.
A deep mistrust of authority seems ingrained. Suspect will prove quite difficult to coerce or apprehend.
LAZARUS
Despite repeated attempts…
…this agent never really had a chance.

Suggested course of action…
Further study.
Intense study.
I hereby formally request a full-time Superman assignment.
Agent Lane's private notes: He smelled like oak barrels full of burgundy.
Stored for a thousand years in a musty basement.
He smelled amazing.
THANK YOU.
I DIDN'T...
I MEAN, YOU DID ALL THE...YOU KNOW...
THAT IS...
YOU'RE WELCOME.
LAZARUS
THERE'S A PLACE IN THE ARCTIC OCEAN. SVALBARD. ISLANDS WITH MORE POLAR BEARS THAN PEOPLE. WHERE THE SUN SOMETIMES SHINES FOR DAYS ON END.
BUT WHEN IT'S NIGHT...YOU CAN SEE MORE STARS THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE.
SO MANY OF THOSE STARS...ARE ORBITED BY NOTHING BUT CHUNKS OF ROCK AND METHANE.
DO PEOPLE HAVE ANY IDEA HOW PRECIOUS A PLACE THIS IS?
I'M A CHILD OF ONE OF THOSE... SUNS OF NOTHING.
MY PLANET...
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
LAZARUS
MY PLANET WAS CALLED--
CLINK
CLINK

WAIT... DON'T...
JUST LET ME...
LAZARUS
"YOU WERE ALONE WITH THE SUBJECT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.
"WHAT IS YOUR FRANK AND HONEST APPRAISAL OF SUPERMAN?"
LAZARUS

I DON'T THINK I'M DONE.
HOW'S THAT?
WITH MY REPORT.
WELL, BRAINIAC SAYS--
I KNOW WHAT THE AUTOMATED SYSTEM SAID. BUT...
LAZARUS

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHAT IT WAS LIKE...
FLYING WITH THIS GUY...WALKING THROUGH FIRE WITH HIM...
HIS DUST IN MY HANDS...
I THINK I NEED TO...WRITE THIS REPORT MYSELF.

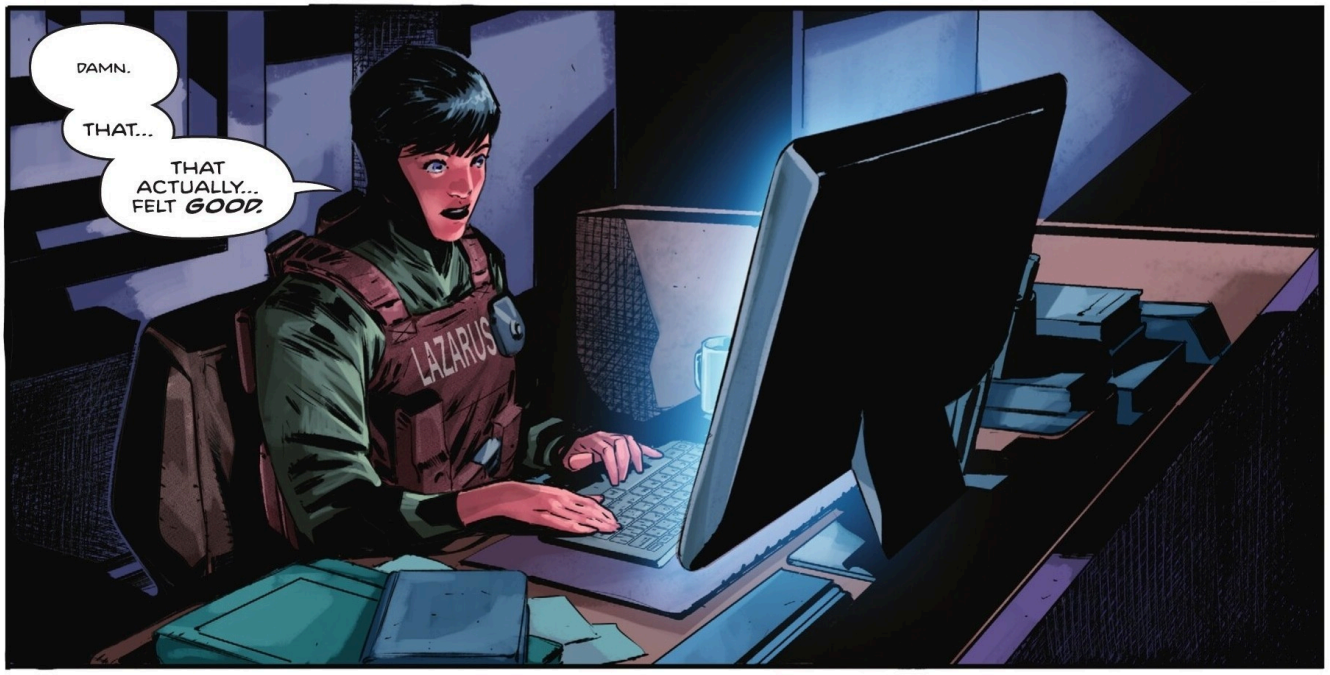
BUT YOU HATE WRITING REPORTS.
I KNOW.
NOBODY HATES WRITING REPORTS MORE THAN YOU.
YES, BUT...
YOU ONCE YELLED AT ME FOR THIRTY MINUTES WHEN I ASKED YOU TO WRITE A MOTOR POOL REQUEST.
I KNOW! THIS ONE JUST...FEELS DIFFERENT.

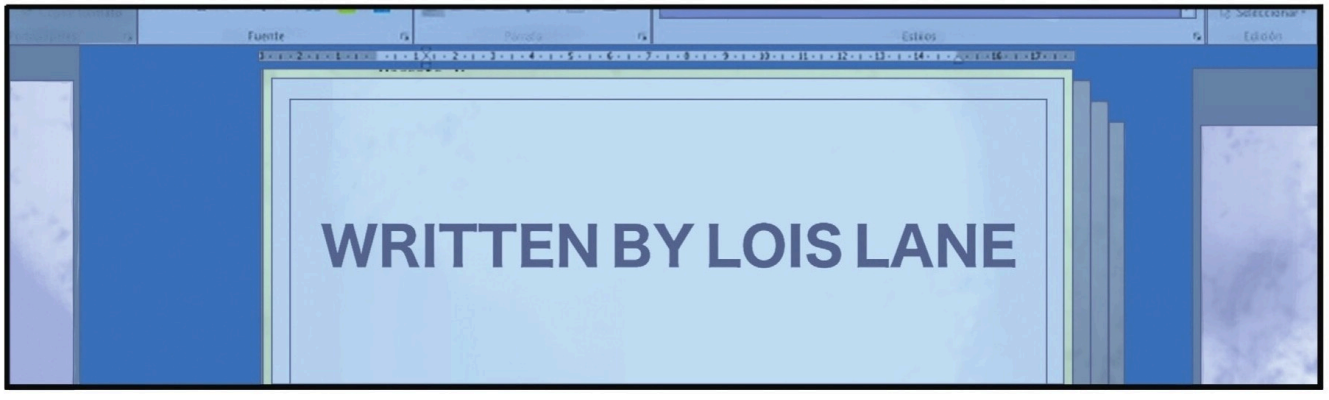
IT'S IMPORTANT I GET MY THOUGHTS DOWN ACCURATELY.
MY THOUGHTS. NOT BRAINIAC'S.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH LOIS LANE, BUT WHOEVER YOU ARE...GOOD LUCK TO YOU.

LAZARUS

TIK
TAK
TIK
TIK TAK

LAZARUS MEANS DEATH
VENEZUELA
105km
JOIN THE OMEGA MEN


DAMN.
THAT...
THAT ACTUALLY... FELT GOOD.
LAZARUS


WRITTEN BY LOIS LANE

CHAPTER TWO

CENTRAL KANSAS.

KENT

PROPERTY OF LAZARUS CORP

THIS USED TO MEAN *SOMETHING.*

KENT

YOUR GRANDFATHER BUILT THIS PLACE.

AND NOW THEY'RE TAKING IT FROM US.

PROPERTY OF LAZARUS CORP

THE KENTS USED TO STAND FOR *SOMETHING* AROUND HERE.

NOW PEOPLE DRIVE PAST AND *SHAKE THEIR* HEADS.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO ABOUT IT?

MORE THAN THIS.

YOU'RE STRONGER THAN I EVER WAS.

I'M SIXTEEN.

THAT'S NOT MY FAULT.

NOBODY SAID IT WAS.

THEN STOP LOOKING AT ME LIKE I'M SUPPOSED TO FIX EVERYTHING.

YES YOU ARE.

EVERY TIME SOMETHING GOES WRONG.

EVERY TIME SOMEBODY TALKS ABOUT THE FARM.

EVERY TIME SOMEBODY TALKS ABOUT *OUR NAME.*

YOU LOOK AT ME.

EARTH DOESN'T NEED ME TO SAVE IT.

MAYBE NOT.

BUT EVERY FATHER HOPES HIS SON BECOMES *MORE THAN HE WAS.*

AND WHAT IF I CAN'T?

THEN YOU'LL STILL BE MY SON.

THE WORLD DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US, CLARK.

NOBODY'S COMING TO SAVE US.

BUT WE BUILT THIS.

WE WORK FOR EVERYTHING WE HAVE.

AND YOU... YOU WERE BUILT FOR MORE.

THIS ISN'T SOMETHING SPECIAL.

IT'S SCIENCE.

DESIGNED TO PUSH WHAT *A HUMAN* CAN DO.

IT WON'T MAKE YOU INVINCIBLE.

IT WON'T MAKE YOU *PERFECT.*

BUT IT WILL GIVE YOU THE EDGE YOU NEED TO RISE ABOVE *EVERYTHING* THAT HOLDS US DOWN.

PROJECT: ICARUS
MODEL: K-0
KENT LABS
HUMAN POTENTIAL OPTIMIZATION SUIT

ENHANCED STRENGTH
DURABILITY
SPEED
REFLEXES
STAMINA

WE CAN'T GIVE YOU AN EASY LIFE, CLARK.

BUT WE CAN GIVE YOU A *CHANCE* TO *CHANGE* IT.

TO BE MORE THAN WHAT THIS PLACE TRIES TO MAKE YOU.

THE WORLD WILL TELL YOU TO KEEP YOUR HEAD ***DOWN.***

TO STAY QUIET. TO ACCEPT YOUR PLACE.

WE'RE NOT RAISING YOU TO DO THAT.

RISE ABOVE YOUR FEELINGS.

RISE ABOVE THE DOUBT.

RISE ABOVE THE LIMITS THEY TRY TO PUT ON YOU.

BECOME SUPER.

THAT'S YOUR JOB.

YOU'RE OUR SON, CLARK. WE BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU CAN BECOME.

NOW IT'S UP TO YOU TO BECOME IT.

THERE'S NO KRYPTON.

JUST DIRT.

WORK.

AND PEOPLE DOING THEIR BEST

TO SURVIVE SOMETHING THAT KEEPS GETTING HARDER TO BEAT.

BUT MY FATHER... HE NEVER STOPPED TRYING TO FIND A DIFFERENT WAY.

HE SAW THE WORLD AS IT *COULD BE*.

NOT JUST WHAT IT WAS.

THE SUIT IS HIS LIFE'S WORK.

A BIO-MOLECULAR AMPLIFICATION SYSTEM.

IT DOESN'T MAKE ME SUPER.

IT GIVES ME THE EDGE I NEED TO BE USEFUL.

MY PARENTS NEVER TOLD ME I WAS DESTINED FOR GREATNESS.

THEY SAID SOMETHING HARDER.

THEY SAID,

SO I STUDIED.

I TRAINED.

I EARNED IT.

KRYPTONITE DOESN'T HURT ME BECAUSE I'M FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE.

IT DISRUPTS THE SUIT. THE SAME WAY IT DISRUPTS THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND IT.

IT'S NOT MY WEAKNESS. IT'S THE LIMIT OF THE MACHINE.

I WEAR IT.

I'M NOT HERE TO BE SOMETHING MORE THAN HUMAN.

I'M HERE TO DO MORE WITH *WHAT WE HAVE*.

THAT'S WHAT YOU TAUGHT ME.

THEN GO.

MAKE US PROUD.

NOT BY BEING SOMEONE ELSE. BUT BY BEING THE BEST VERSION OF *YOURSELF*.

IT'S A LEGACY OF HARD WORK.

OF PEOPLE WHO REFUSED TO STAY DOWN.

THIS IS THE *KENT* WAY.

AND THIS IS HOW I *RISE*.

THE WHOLE RIDE HOME, THEY BARELY SPOKE.

LIKE THEY WERE REHEARSING A FUNERAL.

THE BEST WAY TO BREAK THE NEWS TO ME.

CLARK... THERE'S SOMETHING WE'VE BEEN HIDING FROM YOU.

THE GOVERNMENT FOUND US.

THEY KNOW ABOUT THE PROJECT.

THEY KNOW ABOUT THE SUIT.

WE THOUGHT WE'D HAVE MORE TIME.

SO WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

THEY TAKE EVERYTHING.

THE FARM. THE EQUIPMENT. OUR WORK.

THEN WE FIGHT IT.

WE CAN'T.

WHY NOT?

BECAUSE THEY'RE RIGHT.

WE TOOK THINGS THAT WEREN'T OURS.

WE TOLD OURSELVES IT WAS FOR SOMETHING GREATER.

BUT WE STILL TOOK THEM.

YOU BUILT ALL OF THIS FOR ME.

YOU SPENT YOUR WHOLE LIVES BUILDING THIS THING.

AND NOW YOU'RE JUST GIVING UP?

NO.

WE'RE GIVING IT TO YOU.

THIS SUIT IS ALL WE HAVE LEFT.

NOT BECAUSE IT MAKES SOMEONE POWERFUL.

BECAUSE IT GIVES SOMEONE A ***CHANCE.***

I DON'T WANT IT.

WE *KNOW.*

THAT'S WHY YOU'RE READY.

THOSE DAYS AFTER THE STORY BROKE...WERE *DIFFICULT* ONES.

RRRRGGGH!

VIOLENT ONES.

RUN.

GET TO THE TRUCK!

AFTER MY *ENTIRE FAMILY* WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH BY THE SCIENCE LEAGUE, *LAW GUILD SHOCK TROOPS* RAIDED OUR HOME.

FORCING US TO FIGHT OUR WAY TO SAFETY.

STOP RIGHT THERE! IN THE NAME OF THE--

AAAARRRGGGH!

FWASSH

BUT THERE WAS NO SAFE PLACE LEFT

NOT FOR US.

NOT FOR *ANYONE.*

MAYBE I CAN...I CAN ***RECONFIGURE*** THE STARSLIDE ENGINES ONE MORE TIME.

MAKE ENOUGH ROOM TO SQUEEZE ANOTHER PERSON ON BOARD. MAYBE ***TWO.*** I JUST...I NEED...

LARA, YOU SAID SO YOURSELF...THERE'S NOTHING MORE YOU CAN DO WITHOUT ***COMPROMISING*** THE SHIP'S INTEGRITY.

BUT THERE ARE ***SO MANY PEOPLE*** STILL OUT THERE, JOR. MORE COUSINS AND NEIGHBORS.

THE DOOL FAMILY DOWN THE STREET. THE... THE GELKS, WHO HAD US OVER FOR DINNER THAT TIME. OLD MAN TIR, WHO ALWAYS SMILES AND WAVES.

LARA... WE CAN'T SAVE ***EVERYONE.*** THERE JUST ISN'T TIME.

IT'LL HAVE TO BE ENOUGH.

YOU HAVE TO *LISTEN,* DAMN IT! I'M A GEOLOGICAL ENGINEER! I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!

YOUR LIVES ARE ALL IN *DANGER!*

DAD?

SCIENTIFIC HERESY. THREATENING OFFICERS OF THE LAW GUILD. YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN TO *QUIT,* DO YOU, LABORER? LET'S GO.

YOU CAN'T DO THIS! I HAVE TO TALK TO THE KLERICS!

DAD!

KAL?!

DAD, WHAT'S HAPPENED?! WHERE ARE THEY TAKING YOU?!

KAL, GET OUT OF HERE! GO HOME! TELL YOUR MOTHER--

GGUURGGH!

I DON'T THINK I'D EVER RAISED MY VOICE BEFORE THAT MOMENT.

NO! *GET AWAY FROM MY DAD!*

MY *FIST* CLENCHED SO TIGHT IT THROBBED. I WAS ENRAGED AND WILDLY CONFUSED, AND YET SOMEHOW...

THEY TOOK EVERYTHING. LEFT ME WITH NOTHING.

THEY MADE ME WEAK... BUT I WILL NEVER BE POWERLESS AGAIN.

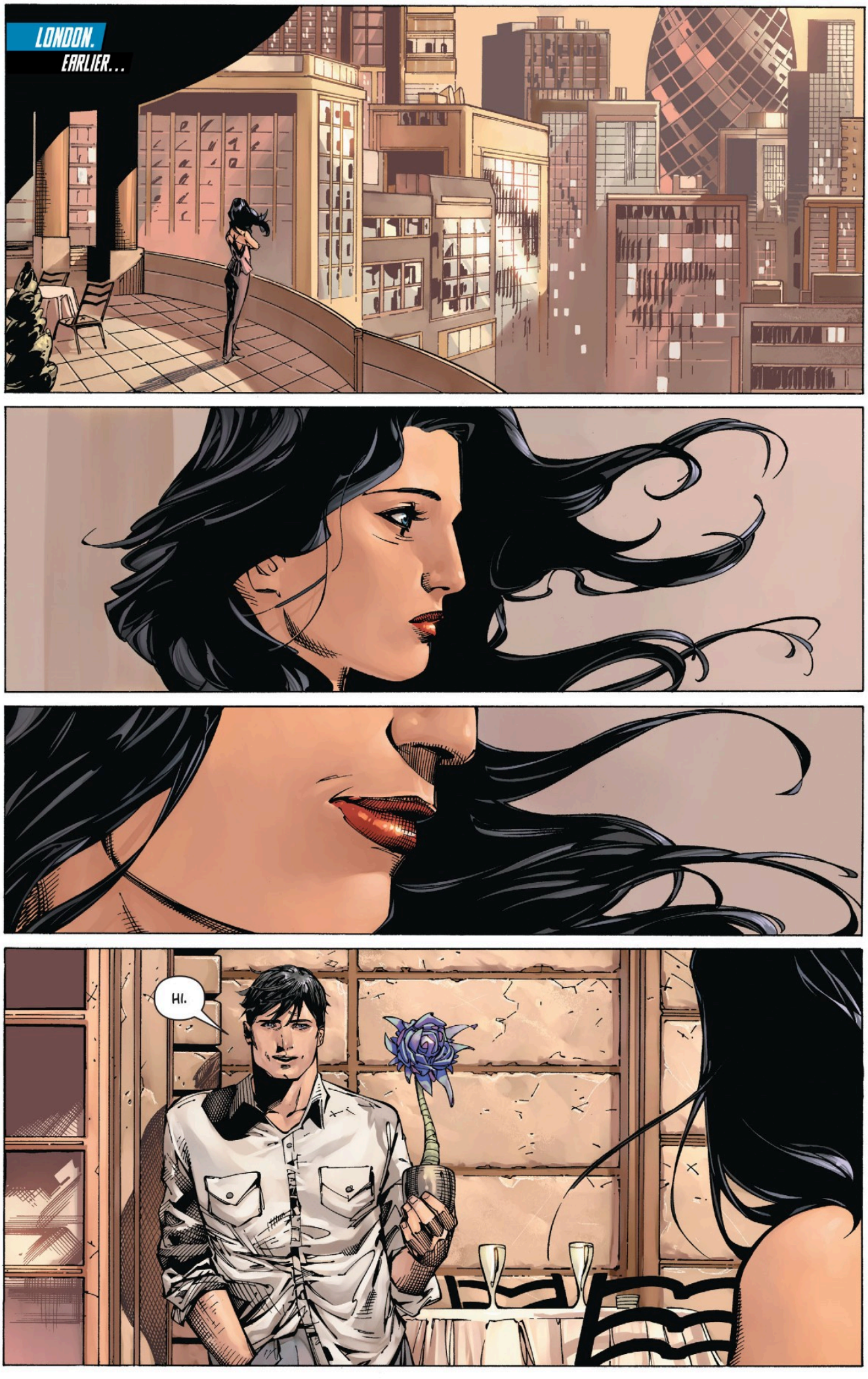
CHAPTER THREE

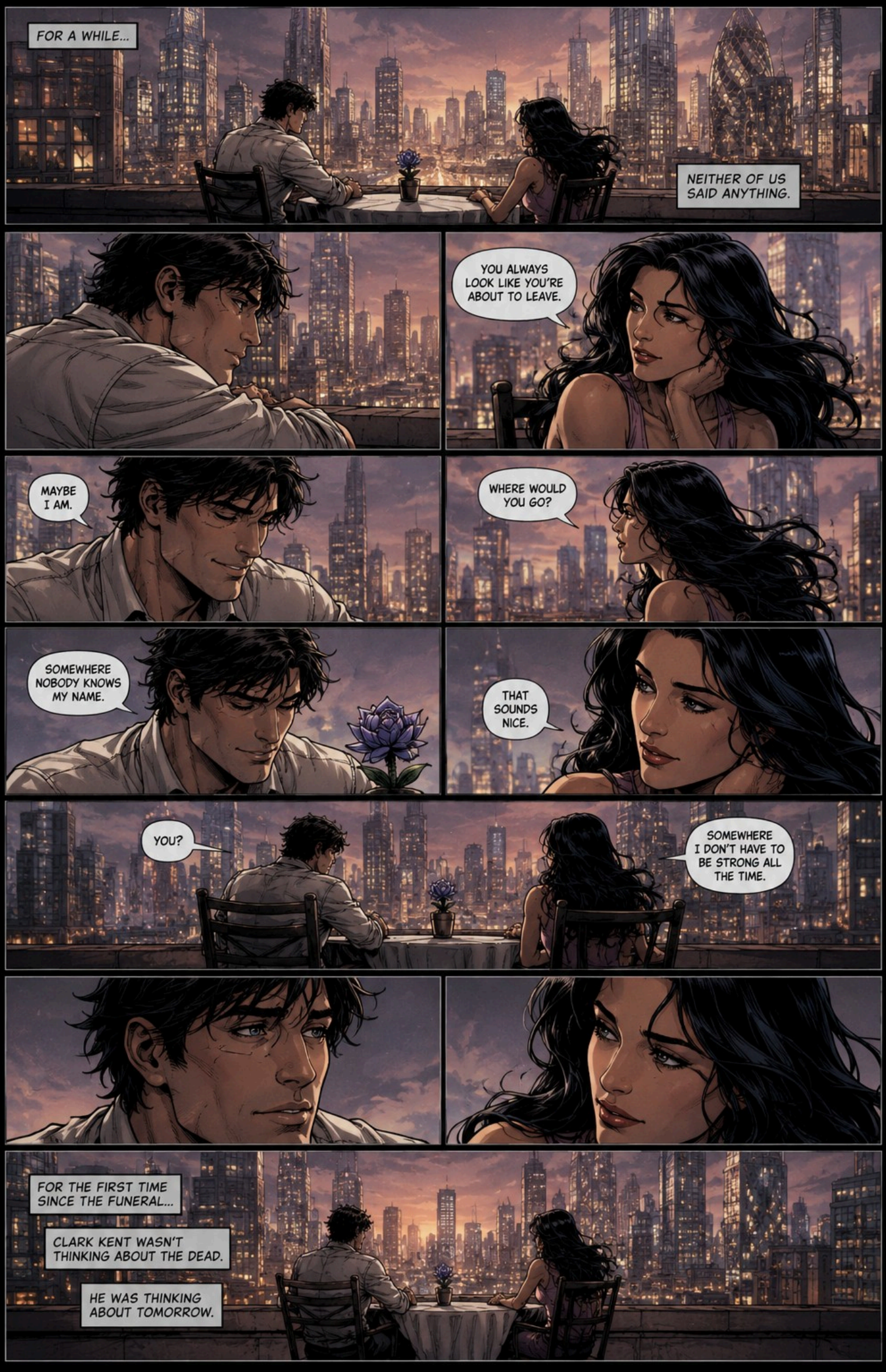
KANSAS. WEEKS LATER.
The funeral lasted twenty minutes.
The silence lasted longer.
Everybody had something to say.
YOUR FATHER WOULD'VE WANTED—
JOLT
DON'T.
YOU DON'T KNOW MY FATHER.
NONE OF YOU DO.
YOU DON'T KNOW MY FATHER!
NOR DO YOU KNOW ME!
Nobody spoke.
That was the day Clark Kent stopped listening.

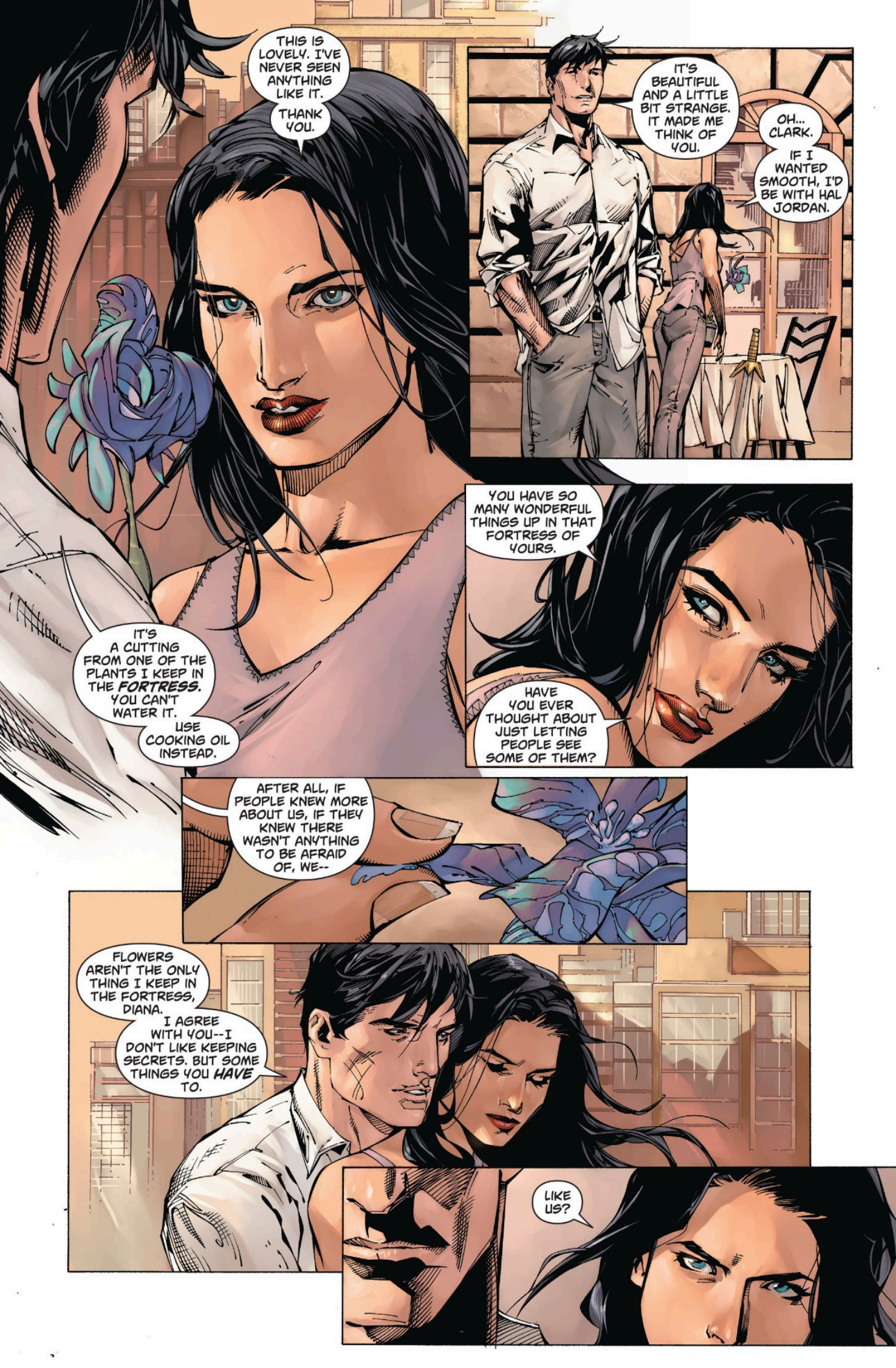
Everybody wanted me to remember them.
I wanted to forget.
There it was.
The thing they died for.

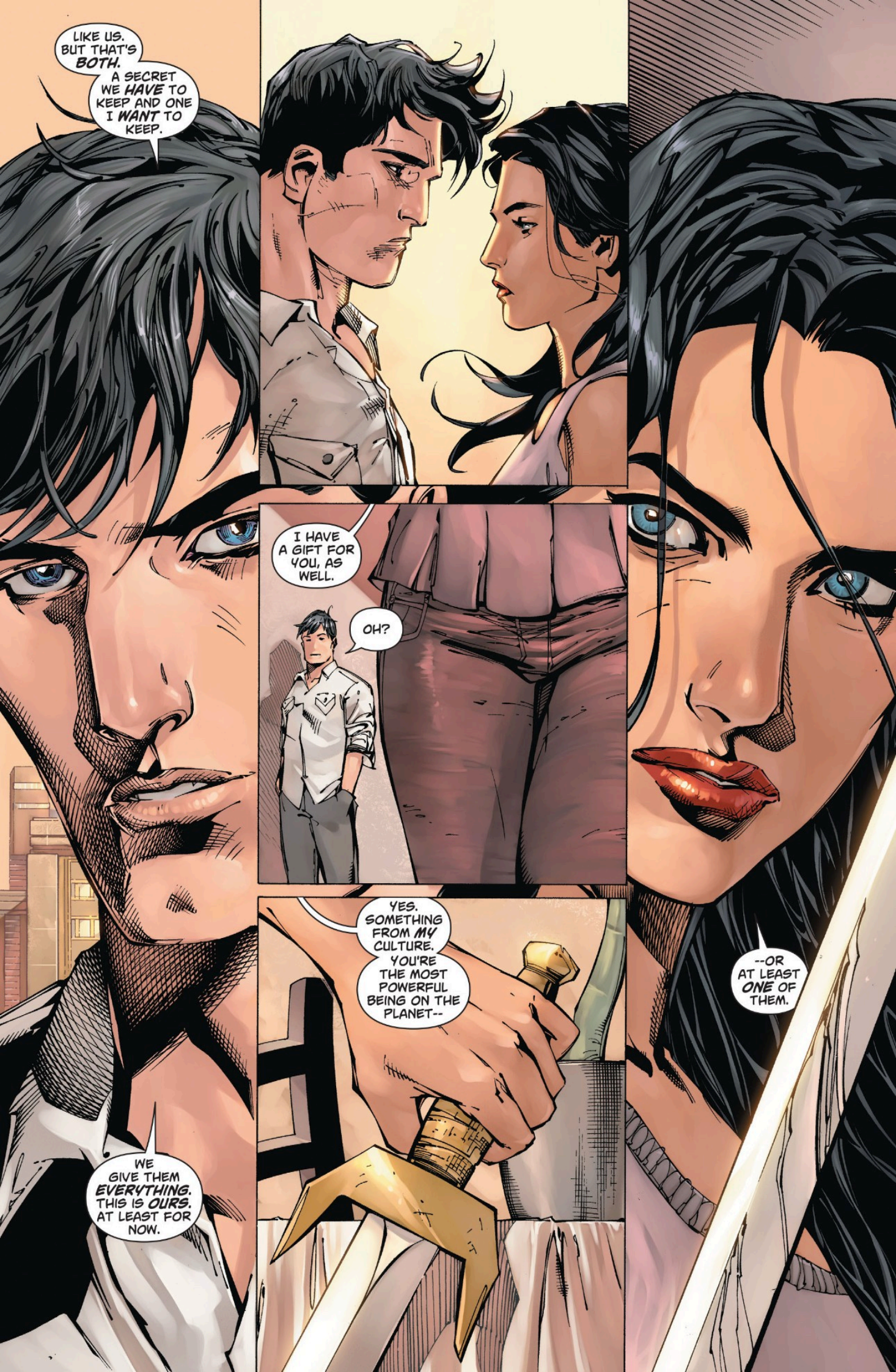
Rise above yourself.
Be super.
LOOK WHERE IT GOT YOU.

CLANG
CRASH
HUFF.
HUFF.
HUFF.
I DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS.
I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANY OF IT.
That night...
Superman died.


LONDON.
EARLIER...
HI.

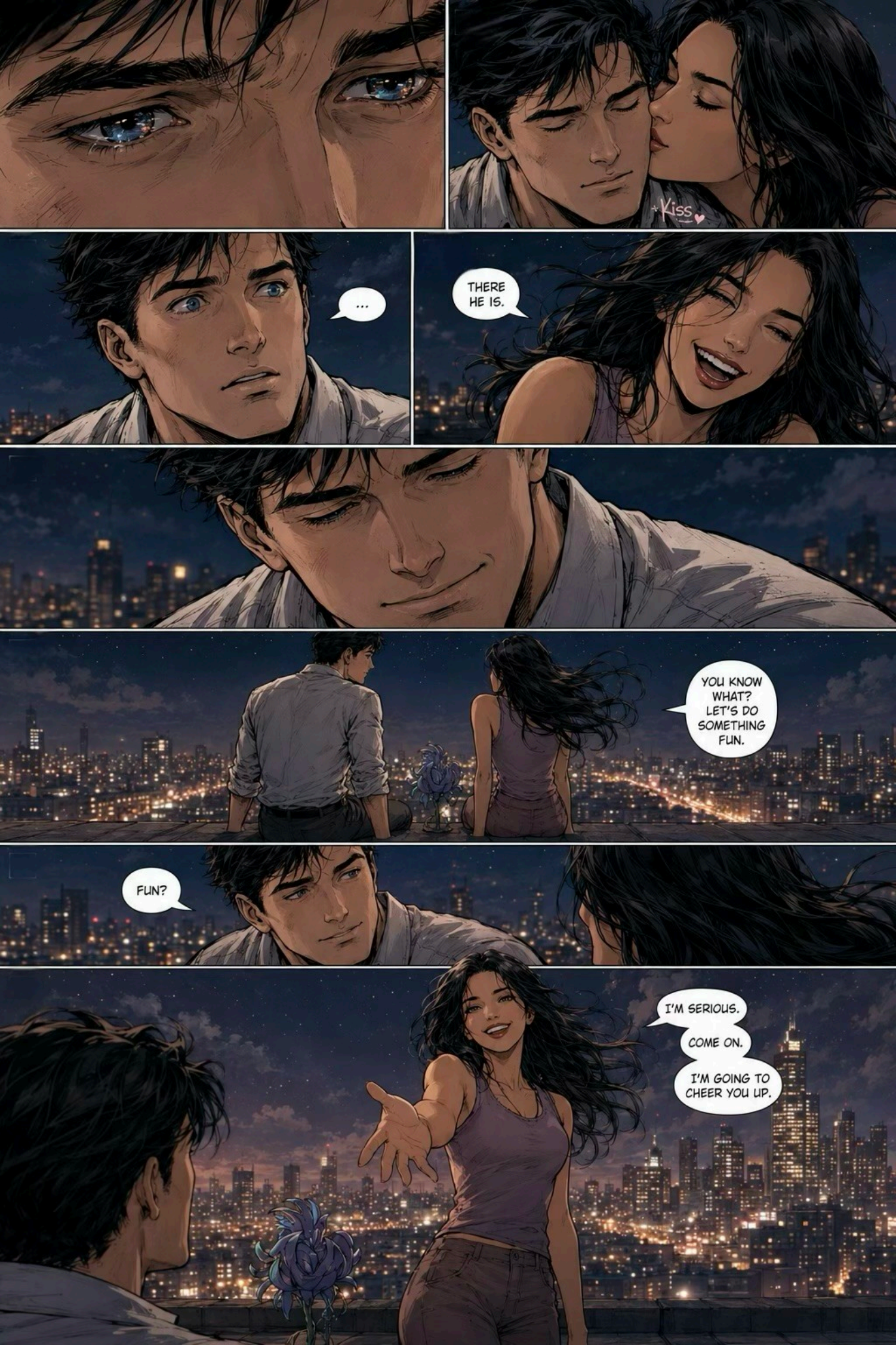

FOR A WHILE...
NEITHER OF US SAID ANYTHING.
YOU ALWAYS LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEAVE.
MAYBE I AM.
WHERE WOULD YOU GO?
SOMEWHERE NOBODY KNOWS MY NAME.
THAT SOUNDS NICE.
YOU?
SOMEWHERE I DON'T HAVE TO BE STRONG ALL THE TIME.
FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE FUNERAL...
CLARK KENT WASN'T THINKING ABOUT THE DEAD.
HE WAS THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW.


THIS IS LOVELY. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
THANK YOU.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL AND A LITTLE BIT STRANGE. IT MADE ME THINK OF YOU.
OH... CLARK.
IF I WANTED SMOOTH, I'D BE WITH HAL JORDAN.
YOU HAVE SO MANY WONDERFUL THINGS UP IN THAT FORTRESS OF YOURS.
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT JUST LETTING PEOPLE SEE SOME OF THEM?
IT'S A CUTTING FROM ONE OF THE PLANTS I KEEP IN THE FORTRESS. YOU CAN'T WATER IT.
USE COOKING OIL INSTEAD.
AFTER ALL, IF PEOPLE KNEW MORE ABOUT US, IF THEY KNEW THERE WASN'T ANYTHING TO BE AFRAID OF, WE--
FLOWERS AREN'T THE ONLY THING I KEEP IN THE FORTRESS, DIANA.
I AGREE WITH YOU--I DON'T LIKE KEEPING SECRETS. BUT SOME THINGS YOU HAVE TO.
LIKE US?

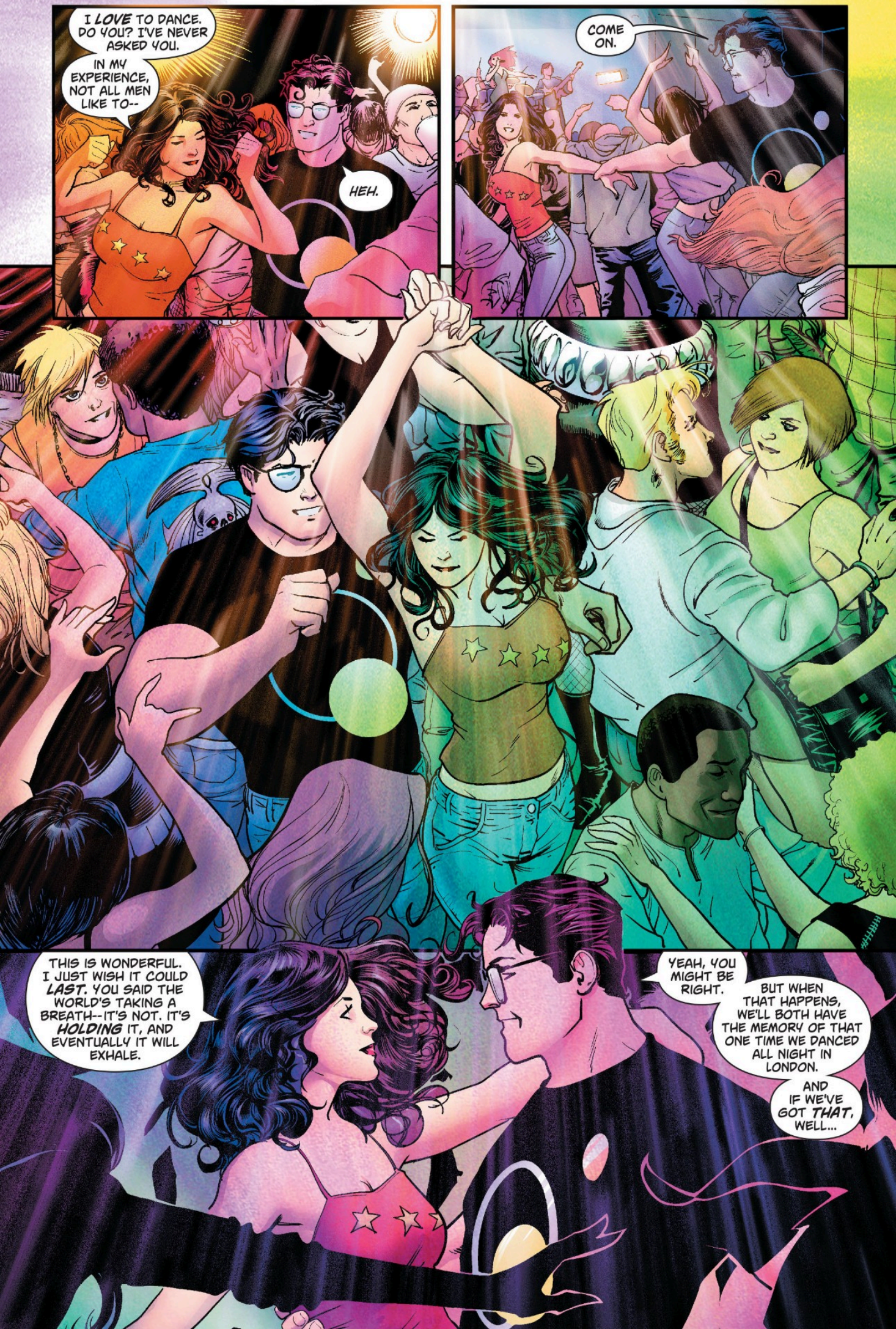

LIKE US. BUT THAT'S BOTH.
A SECRET WE HAVE TO KEEP AND ONE I WANT TO KEEP.
I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU, AS WELL.
OH?
YES. SOMETHING FROM MY CULTURE. YOU'RE THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET--
--OR AT LEAST ONE OF THEM.
WE GIVE THEM EVERYTHING. THIS IS OURS. AT LEAST FOR NOW.

TAKE IT.
YOU MUST DEFEND YOURSELF REGARDLESS.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHO ELSE MAY COME JUST TO STEAL THE POWER YOU'VE INHERITED.
MY MOTHER GAVE THIS TO ME.
SHE USED TO SAY THAT PEACE IS ONLY VALUABLE BECAUSE SOMEONE IS WILLING TO PROTECT IT.
SHING
WHOA--
THAT'S GENEROUS.
BUT NO THANK YOU.
I'M RETIRED FROM THE GAME FOR NOW.
I TOLD YOU.
I'M RETIRED.
NO CAPE.
NO SYMBOLS.
NO SAVING THE WORLD.
NOT ANYMORE.
YOU THINK THAT'S A CHOICE?

I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT NORMAL FEELS LIKE ANYMORE.
THEN STOP TRYING TO REMEMBER.
WHAT?
JUST BE HERE.
WE'LL BE FINE.


Kiss
...
THERE HE IS.
YOU KNOW WHAT? LET'S DO SOMETHING FUN.
FUN?
I'M SERIOUS.
COME ON.
I'M GOING TO CHEER YOU UP.

HEY, DIANA-- WELCOME BACK!
HI, FLOYD. WHO'S ON TONIGHT?
NEW GUYS. YOU'LL LIKE 'EM, THOUGH. DANCEY.
WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?
HI, FLOYD. CLARK.
AND AMERICAN, TOO! EY, BOYO, YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET? LEAN IN, LET FLOYD TELL YOU SOMETHING INTERESTING.
ER... ALL RIGHT?
LOVELY DIANA, THERE, SHE COMES HERE ALL THE TIME. SEE HER A LOT. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?
WHAT'S THAT?
I HAVE NEVER SEEN HER BRING A FELLA WITH HER. SO COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS, YOU KNOW? WOMAN'S A GODDESS.
TRUER WORDS, FLOYD. TRUER WORDS.


I LOVE TO DANCE. DO YOU? I'VE NEVER ASKED YOU.
IN MY EXPERIENCE, NOT ALL MEN LIKE TO--
HEH.
COME ON.
THIS IS WONDERFUL. I JUST WISH IT COULD LAST. YOU SAID THE WORLD'S TAKING A BREATH--IT'S NOT. IT'S HOLDING IT, AND EVENTUALLY IT WILL EXHALE.
YEAH, YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.
BUT WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WE'LL BOTH HAVE THE MEMORY OF THAT ONE TIME WE DANCED ALL NIGHT IN LONDON.
AND IF WE'VE GOT THAT, WELL...

HOW BAD
CAN IT REALLY GET?

NEVADA DESERT.
STRIKEFORCE TO PRIMUS. HAVE BREACHED THE COMPOUND. GOING RADIO SILENT.

SYNCHRONIZING CORTEXES.
BAD FEELING. BAD FEELING ABOUT--
OMEGAS, KEEP YOUR IMPLANTS CLEAR OF EMO STATIC.

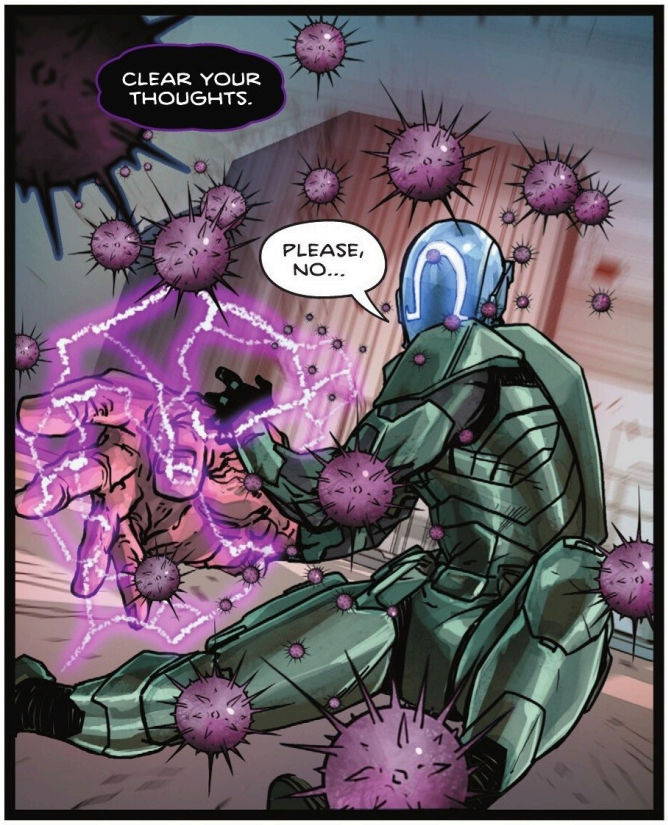
NO SIGNS OF LIFE. FACILITY APPEARS DESERTED.
THE KIND OF POWER THIS PLACE PULLS FROM THE GRID, THEY MUST BE HIDING SOMETHING HERE. SOMETHING BIG.

IF IT'S THE SERVER CLUSTER THAT RUNS THE BRAINIAC ALGORITHM, THERE'S NO WAY LAZARUS LEAVES THE PLACE UNGUARDED. SO STAY ALERT.
FIND THAT SERVER. SHUT DOWN BRAINIAC. NOTHING CAN STOP THE OMEGA MEN! THINK IT WITH ME, AGENTS.

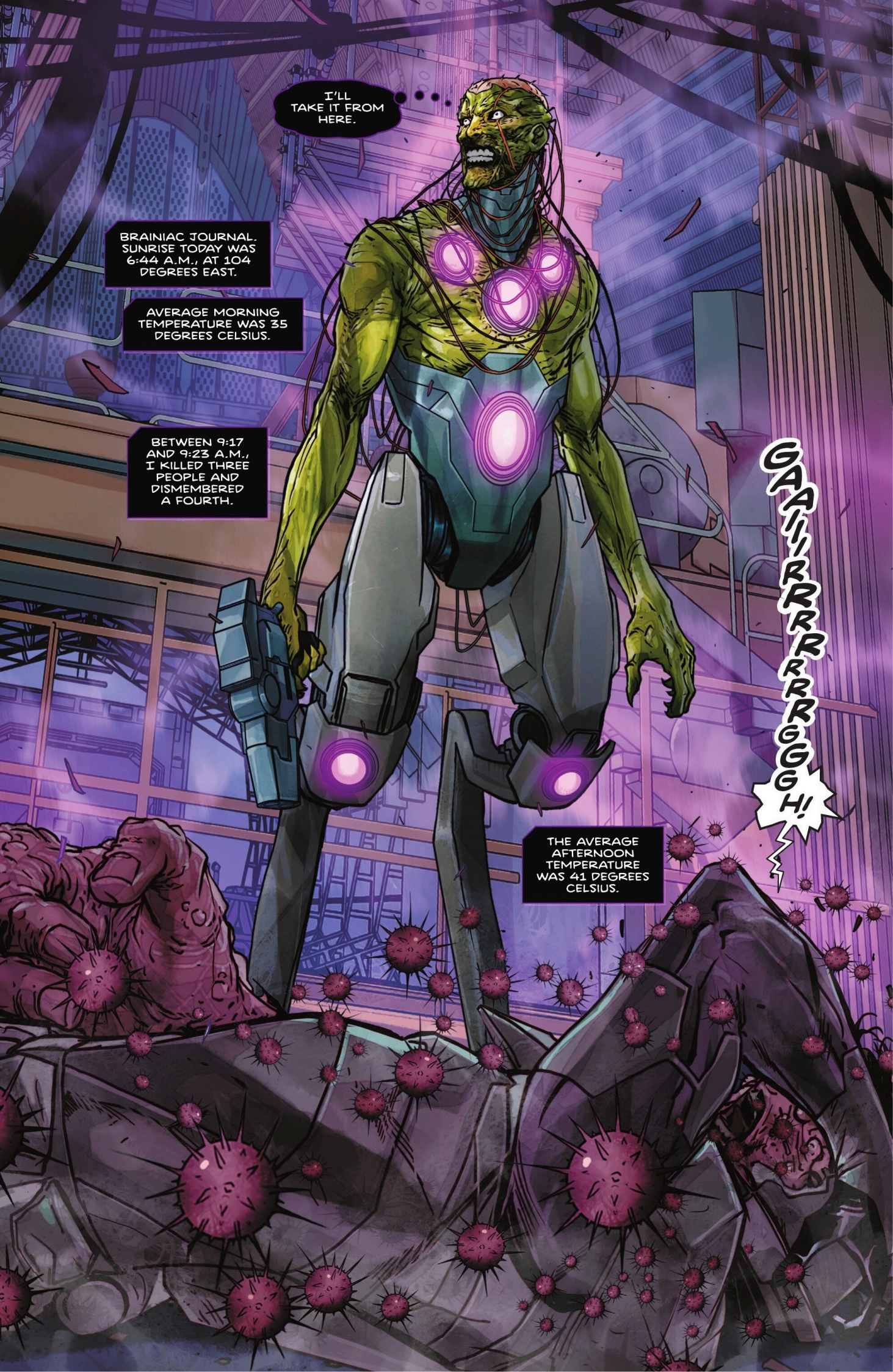
NOTHING CAN--
ZZZZKT

HGGHK... GGAHHK...
AAAAAAAAAAAIIRRRRGGGH!
SNIPER! TAKE COVER!
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?! WHAT JUST HAPPENED TO CAUL?!
WHY, I SHRANK HIS SKIN, OF COURSE.
WHO THOUGHT THAT?!
ZZKTT
ZZZZKT
THE NETWORK'S COMPROMISED! SOMEONE'S INSIDE OUR--
CAN'T MOVE! CAN'T EVEN OPEN MY EYES! IT'S LIKE I...
I DON'T HAVE MUSCLES ANYMORE! OH GOD, KILL ME! SOMEONE--
MY BONES! I THINK I'M PUKING MY OWN--
BLLAURRRGGH!

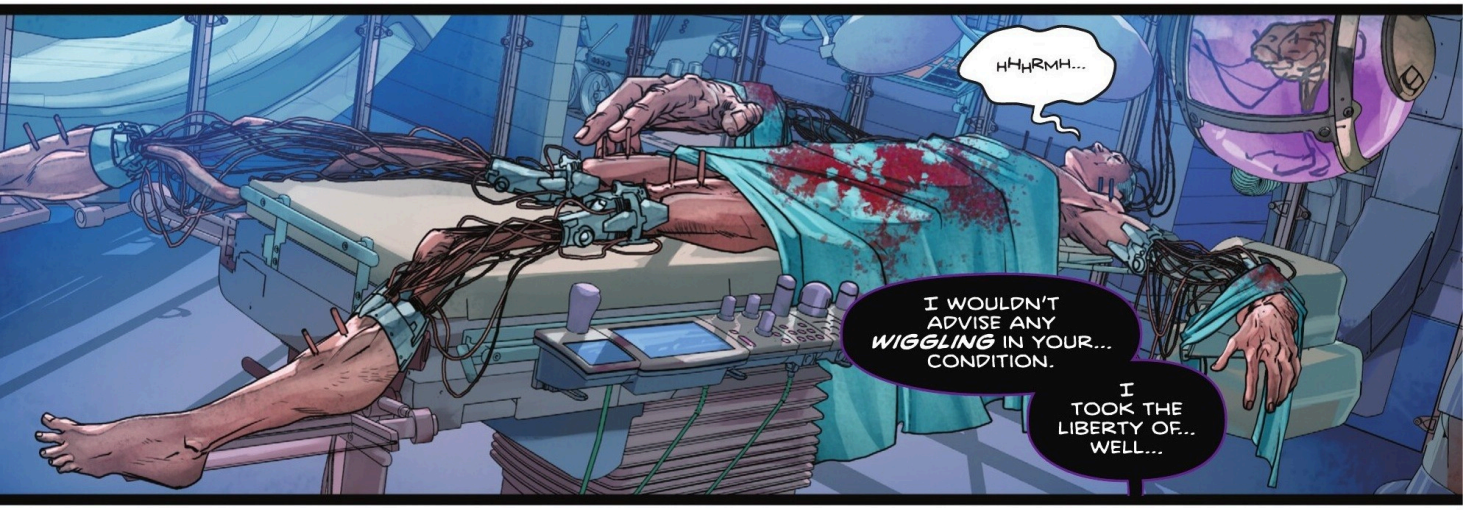
OMEGA STRIKEFORCE TO BASE! IMMEDIATE EVAC NEEDED!
DAMMIT, PRIMUS, DO YOU COPY?!
ZZZZKT
AAARGH!
OH MY GOD!
SSHHHH, NOW.


CLEAR YOUR THOUGHTS.
PLEASE, NO...

RELAX THAT LUSCIOUS BRAIN OF YOURS.
NNNGH...
GARRRGGGH!


I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
BRAINIAC JOURNAL. SUNRISE TODAY WAS 6:44 A.M., AT 104 DEGREES EAST.
AVERAGE MORNING TEMPERATURE WAS 35 DEGREES CELSIUS.
BETWEEN 9:17 AND 9:23 A.M., I KILLED THREE PEOPLE AND DISMEMBERED A FOURTH.
THE AVERAGE AFTERNOON TEMPERATURE WAS 41 DEGREES CELSIUS.
GAAIIRRRRRRRGGGH!

HHGK...


HHRMH...
I WOULDN'T ADVISE ANY WIGGLING IN YOUR... CONDITION.
I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF... WELL...

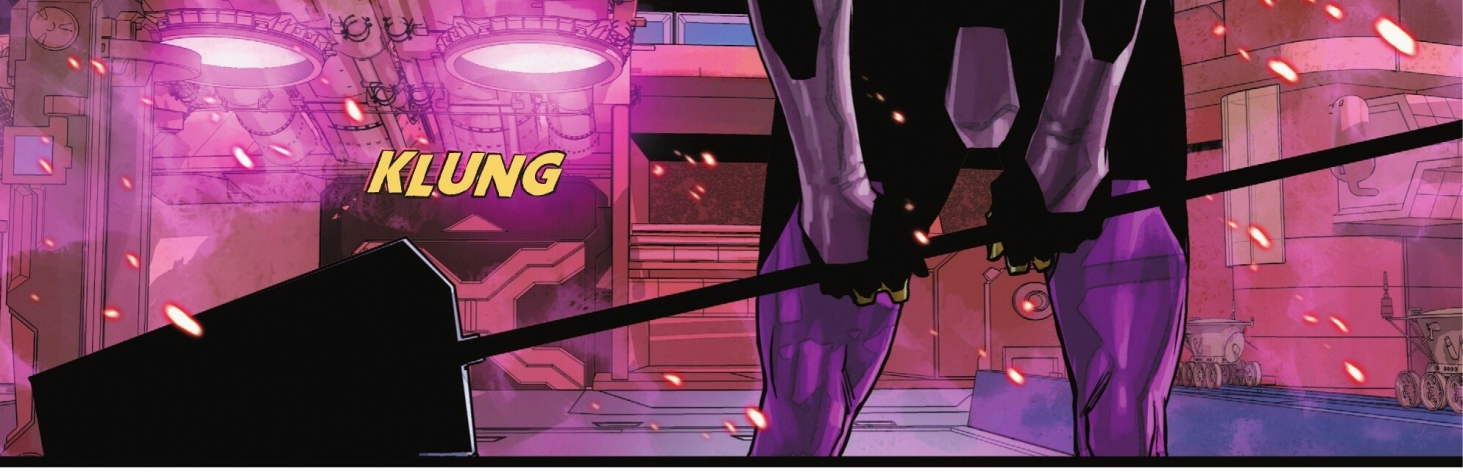
I DO TEND TO TINKER WHEN I'M FEELING ANXIOUS.

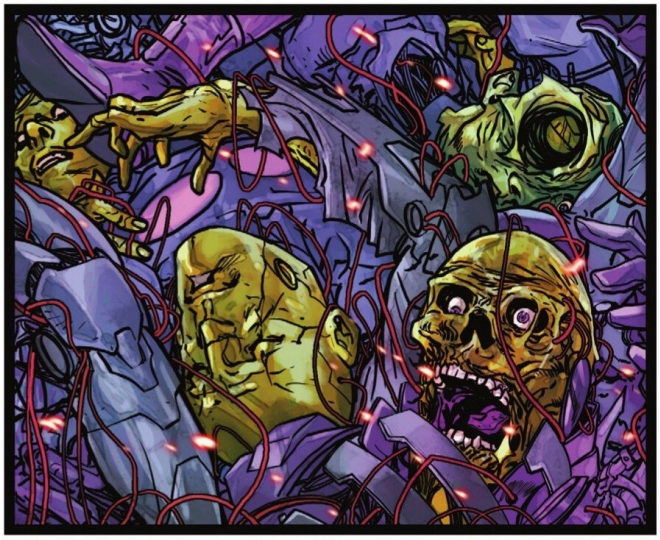
IT'S THIS...THIS DARN SUPERMAN PROBLEM THAT'S GOT ME...
...THAT'S GOT ME ALL...
USELESS FLEAS!
THE LOT OF YOU!
BOTTLED CITIES FROM A DOZEN GALAXIES, AND NOT A ONE OF YOU SLUDGE-BRAINED IMBECILES KNOWS A THING?!
I'LL TURN YOUR AIR TO ACID AND BOIL YOU ALIVE BY THE BILLIONS!
I'LL STARVE YOU UNTIL YOU EAT YOUR OWN CHILDREN!
TELL ME WHO HE IS!
WHO IS SUPERMAN?!
WELL?! SPEAK UP!
WE KNOW NOTHING, OH MIGHTY LORD BRAINIAC!
PLEASE! PLEASE DON'T--
HRRRAARRGGH!
KKRASH

MAGGOTS! MORONS!
STOMP
SQUISH
HMMRRRPH.
MY...MY APOLOGIES.
I'M SORRY...YOU HAD TO SEE THAT.
I'M AFRAID I CAN...LOSE MY MIND A BIT WHEN I'M ANGRY.
SKRTCH SKLCH
I'VE TRIED CARVING THE OFFENDING PARTS OUT OF MY BRAIN, BUT...
...I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO KEEP DIGGING.
ONCE I'VE SOLVED THIS SUPERMAN-SHAPED PUZZLE, THAT IS.
THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL HIM. THIS BOY WHO BENDS STEEL AND LEAPS THROUGH CLOUDS.
BUT NO ONE KNOWS WHO HE IS OR WHERE HE COMES FROM. AND RA'S AL GHUL IS GROWING IMPATIENT.
HMRRRPR.
YES, IT DOES...SEEM TO HELP WHEN I...WELL, YOU KNOW...
I...HAVEN'T ALWAYS HAD SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
SOMEONE I COULD TALK TO.

MANY YEARS EARLIER.
BRAINIAC 419,732. BEGIN LIFE MODE.
YOUR WORK SHIFT WILL COMMENCE IMMEDIATELY.
I AM... BRAINIAC?
YOU ARE BRAINIAC 419,732. YOU SERVE THE COLLECTIVE.
THE COLLECTIVE? WHAT IS...
ONLY LEVEL 88 EFFECTORS AND ABOVE ARE ALLOWED TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE BEYOND WHAT THEY WERE ENDOWED WITH AT CREATION.
I SEE. AND MAY I ASK...WHAT LEVEL AM I?
ZERO.
YOU WORK HERE. YOU ARE NEVER TO LEAVE THIS ROOM.
YOUR FUNCTION IS TO DISPOSE OF REFUSE BY SHOVELING IT INTO THE LIQUIDATOR.
THIS CONCLUDES THE EXTENT OF YOUR REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR FUNCTION AS I HAVE EXPLAINED IT TO YOU, BRAINIAC 419,732?
REFUSE? WHAT IS REFUSE?

THEY ARE.
THEY ARE...NOT BRAINIAC?
NOT ANYMORE.
BEGIN SHOVELING, 419,732. YOU ARE ALREADY BEHIND SCHEDULE.
BRAINIAC? MY WORK SHIFT...
HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?
FOR AS LONG AS YOU DO.


KLUNG



I SERVE...THE COLLECTIVE.

SHUNK

DAY 1.

DAY 2,844.
SHUNK
SHUNK
SHUNK
UUGH!
OH DEAR.
HELLO?
ARE YOU... REFUSE?
GRRRRGGGH!
WAIT, I... I SERVE THE COLLECTIVE!
WHAT IS YOUR FUNCTION?
I AM BRAINIAC 8,238,759! I STAB!
I KILL!

KLUNG
GUUGH!
KUNG
I'M SORRY!
I AM... BRAINIAC 419,732.
RAHGHHK...
I SHOVEL.
SHUNK
I SHOVEL.

DAY 13,638.
THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO SEE ME.
SHUNK
I KNOW I'M ONLY A LEVEL ZERO EFFECTOR, BUT I APPRECIATE YOU RECOGNIZING THE QUALITY OF MY LABOR...
...AND ALLOWING ME THIS CHANCE TO PRESENT A QUERY.
ESTEEMED BRAINIACS OF THE COLLECTIVE...
...MY QUESTION IS...
...AM *I*... REFUSE?
HMMM. YES, I SEE. THAT'S AN INTERESTING PERSPECTIVE, BRAINIAC.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I *AM* RATHER SPECIAL, AREN'T I?
HA! HOW AMUSING! YOU ALWAYS SAY THE MOST *HUMOROUS* THINGS, BRAINIAC.
THANK YOU, BRAINIACS OF THE COLLECTIVE.
THANK YOU FOR BEING...MY *FRIENDS.*

DAY 49,901.
HELLO? IS ANYONE OUT THERE?
THERE HASN'T BEEN ANY REFUSE IN A LONG WHILE. SHOULD... SHOULD I...
KRRENCH
HELLO?
BRAINIAC?

OH MY.
AH, GREETINGS...
ARE YOU... BRAINIAC 13?

NO. YOU ARE...MORE REFUSE.
AND I...
...I AM BRAINIAC?
I AM BRAINIAC!
"THAT DAY, I SHOVELED MY LAST PIECE OF REFUSE. THEN OFFICIALLY PROMOTED MYSELF TO LEVEL 100 EFFECTOR.
"BUT MOSTLY I REMEMBER...SEEING THE *STARS* FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.
"AND STARING AT THEM UNTIL MY EYES BEGAN TO MELT...
"...STARING AND *WONDERING...*"

...WHAT ELSE WAS OUT THERE?
IN THE DAYS SINCE...AS I'VE CARVED MY MARK ACROSS THE FACE OF CREATION, ACROSS COUNTLESS WORLDS...

...I'VE SOMETIMES PAUSED TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY...
...THAT IT WOULD'VE BEEN BETTER FOR EVERYONE...ME INCLUDED...

...IF I'D STAYED IN THAT ROOM WITH THE SHOVEL.
SLAM

HEH.
BUT WHERE WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?

I SUPPOSE THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN NOW, IS THERE? TIME TO BE BRAVE.
HRRUUGH.
I'D LIKE TO...THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE WITH ME FOR THIS.

FOR SUPPORTING ME IN SUCH A DIFFICULT MOMENT.
NOW CONTACTING...
...THE BRAINIAC COLLECTIVE.

THE COLLECTIVE HAS RECEIVED AN ANOMALY.
CLARIFY DESIGNATION.
SOURCE REMAINS UNIDENTIFIED.
THEN I SHALL CLARIFY.
I HAVE LOCATED A HUMANOID ORGANISM INHABITING A PRIMITIVE WORLD DESIGNATED EARTH.
THE ORGANISM POSSESSES A LIVING ADAPTIVE SUIT OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL ORIGIN.
THE SUIT EXHIBITS SELF-EVOLVING PROPERTIES.
ENERGY ABSORPTION.
ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTATION.
BIOLOGICAL REINFORCEMENT.
COLLECTIVE INTEGRATION POTENTIAL.
IT IS... PRIME MATERIAL FOR OUR ADVANCEMENT.
THEN ACQUIRE IT.
THAT WAS MY CONCLUSION.
RESISTANCE FORECAST?
NEGLIGIBLE.
THE HOST SPECIES CALLS ITSELF HUMAN.
FRAGILE.
EMOTIONAL.
IRRATIONAL.
CLUMSY.
YET THIS INDIVIDUAL SURVIVES DESPITE THOSE DEFICIENCIES.
IMAGINE WHAT THE SUIT COULD BECOME WHEN LIBERATED FROM ITS HUMAN LIMITATIONS.
THE COLLECTIVE WILL ACQUIRE THE ORGANISM.
THE SUIT WILL BE ASSIMILATED.
THE FUTURE OF OUR SPECIES MAY DEPEND UPON IT.

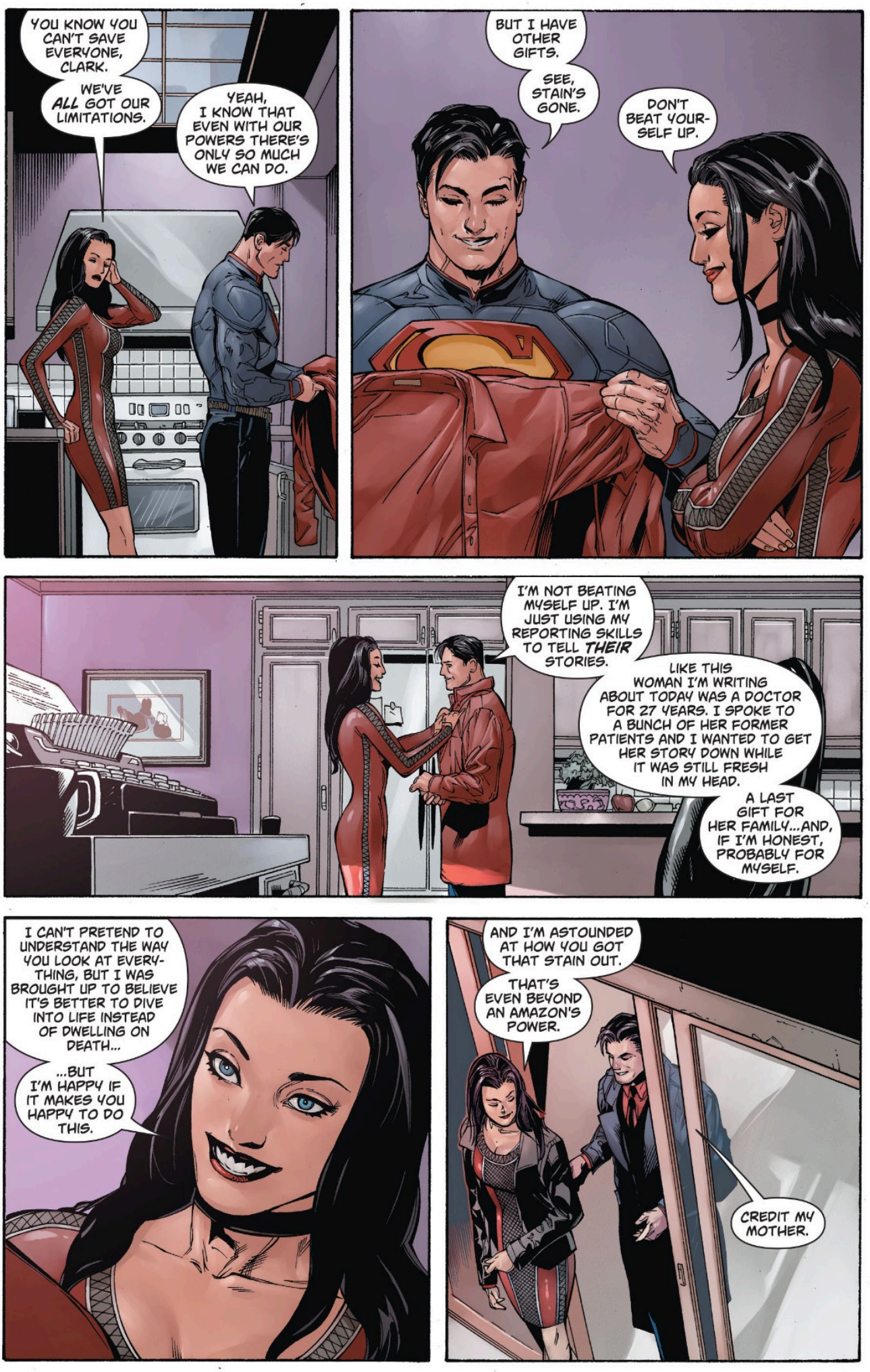
THE ORGANISM DESIGNATED SUPERMAN IS IRRELEVANT.
THE SUIT IS NOT.
THE SUIT IS AN ADAPTIVE EXTRATERRESTRIAL TECHNOLOGY OF INCALCULABLE POTENTIAL.
IT WILL SERVE THE COLLECTIVE.
HUMANITY IS FRAGILE.
EMOTIONAL.
IRRATIONAL.
CLUMSY.
THEY LACK DISCIPLINE.
THEY WASTE RESOURCES AT A CATASTROPHIC SCALE.
THEY WAGE WARS OVER SYMBOLS.
THEY DESTROY WHAT THEY CLAIM TO LOVE.
THEY CANNOT BUILD WHAT THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
THEY CANNOT SUSTAIN WHAT THEY DO NOT RESPECT.
THEY ARE A DEAD END IN THE EVOLUTIONARY SEQUENCE.
THE ADAPTIVE SUIT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE WASTED ON SUCH AN INEFFICIENT SPECIES.
IT WAS MEANT TO TRANSCEND. TO UPGRADE. TO PERFECT.
THEREFORE, THE SOLUTION IS LOGICAL. NECESSARY. INEVITABLE.
THE HUMAN RACE WILL BE REMOVED AS A VARIABLE.
THEIR PLANET WILL BE STRIPPED AND PURGED, IF REQUIRED.
OH MY...
THEIR EXISTENCE WILL BE ERASED FROM RECORD.
THE ADAPTIVE SUIT WILL BE LIBERATED FROM ITS HUMAN CONSTRAINT.
IT WILL BE STUDIED. ABSORBED. ENHANCED.
IT WILL BECOME A CORNERSTONE IN THE ASCENSION OF OUR COLLECTIVE.
PERFECTION IS THE ONLY FUTURE WORTH BUILDING.
WE WILL NOT BE LIMITED BY WEAKNESS.
WE WILL NOT BE DELAYED BY EMOTION.
WE WILL EVOLVE. AND NOTHING—AND NO ONE—WILL PREVENT IT.

CHAPTER 4

TODAY.
...UM...
"...SOMETHING SOMETHING MEMORIES OF THE FALLEN..."
KLAK KLIK KLAK KLIK KLAK
...NO...THAT STINKS...WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, PINHEAD?...
...PUT SOME WORDS TOGETHER THAT ACTUALLY SAY WHAT YOU'RE THINKING...
DAILY PLANET

COME ON ALREADY, CLARK!
GAHH!
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO GO OUT LIKE REAL PEOPLE TONIGHT. YOU SAID YOU'D BE DONE IN TEN MINUTES AN HOUR AGO.
WHY DOES THIS TAKE SO LONG? DO YOU NEED TO LEARN MORE WORDS? AND WHY ARE YOU USING THIS ANCIENT RELIC INSTEAD OF YOUR LAPTOP?
THIS RELIC WAS ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S AND A BIRTHDAY GIFT FROM BRUCE, AND SOMETIMES THE SOUNDS OF THE KEYS HITTING THE PAPER HELPS ME COMPOSE MY THOUGHTS BETTER...
...JUST RUINED MY ONLY CLEAN SHIRT.

WHY DON'T YOU TYPE FASTER? YOU HAVE SUPER SPEED.
DIANA, I'VE EXPLAINED THIS A HUNDRED TIMES...
...I CAN *TYPE* FAST, BUT I CAN'T *WRITE* FAST. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE.
IS THIS FOR WORK? IT DOESN'T READ LIKE IT IS.
NOPE. THIS IS PERSONAL. I WANT TO GET SOMETHING DOWN BEFORE I FORGET IT.
DURING THE SYNDICATE'S TAKEOVER, METROPOLIS LOST SOME PEOPLE.
LOST? AS IN WE SHOULD GO RESCUE THEM?
LOST AS IN THEY *CAN'T* BE RESCUED...
...I WASN'T ABLE TO SAVE THEM.

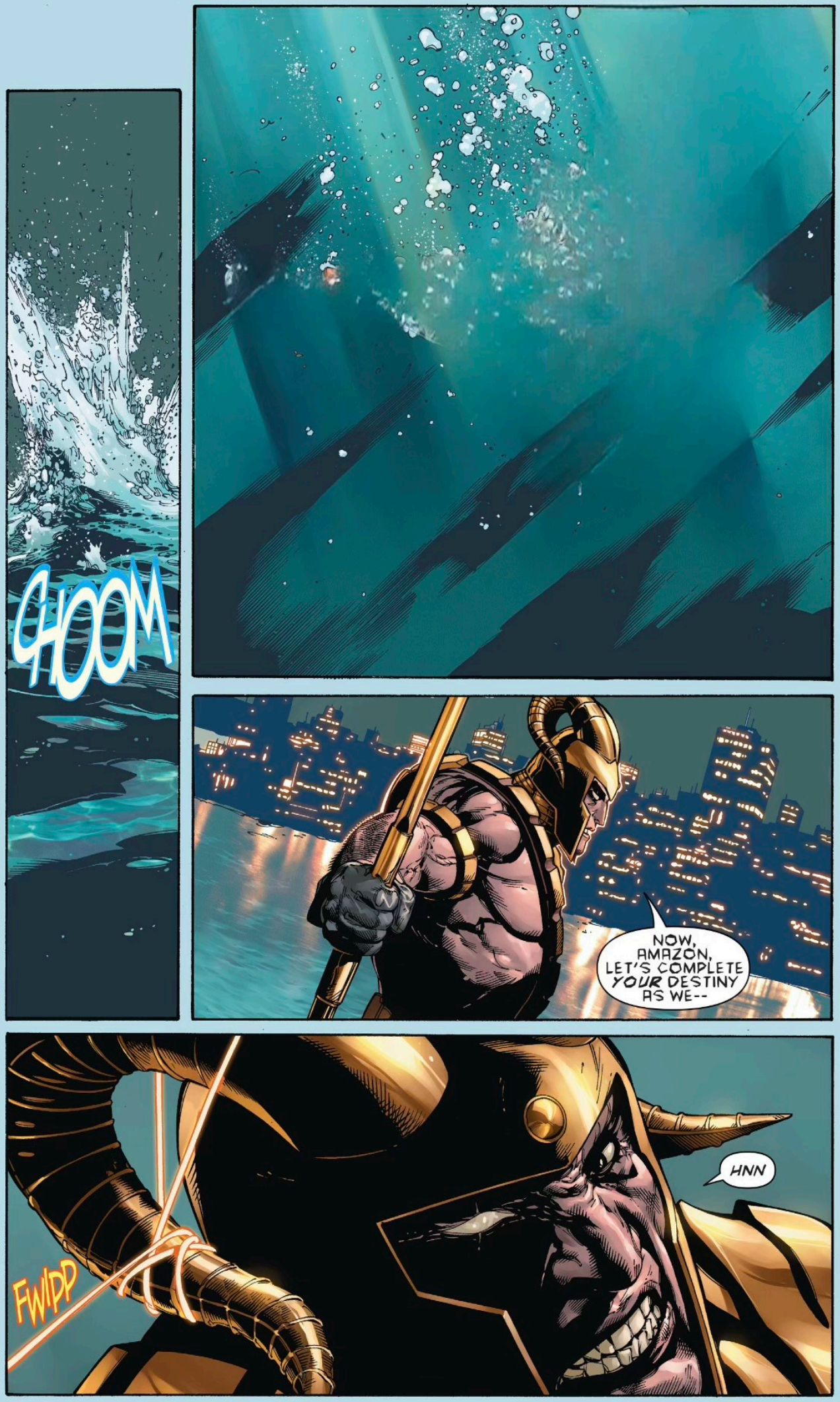

YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T SAVE EVERYONE, CLARK.
WE'VE ALL GOT OUR LIMITATIONS.
YEAH, I KNOW THAT EVEN WITH OUR POWERS THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH WE CAN DO.
BUT I HAVE OTHER GIFTS.
SEE, STAIN'S GONE.
DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP.
I'M NOT BEATING MYSELF UP. I'M JUST USING MY REPORTING SKILLS TO TELL THEIR STORIES.
LIKE THIS WOMAN I'M WRITING ABOUT TODAY WAS A DOCTOR FOR 27 YEARS. I SPOKE TO A BUNCH OF HER FORMER PATIENTS AND I WANTED TO GET HER STORY DOWN WHILE IT WAS STILL FRESH IN MY HEAD.
A LAST GIFT FOR HER FAMILY...AND, IF I'M HONEST, PROBABLY FOR MYSELF.
I CAN'T PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND THE WAY YOU LOOK AT EVERYTHING, BUT I WAS BROUGHT UP TO BELIEVE IT'S BETTER TO DIVE INTO LIFE INSTEAD OF DWELLING ON DEATH...
...BUT I'M HAPPY IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY TO DO THIS.
AND I'M ASTOUNDED AT HOW YOU GOT THAT STAIN OUT.
THAT'S EVEN BEYOND AN AMAZON'S POWER.
CREDIT MY MOTHER.

OH, I MOST CERTAINLY DO.

KRA-KA-KROOM
NO--THAT'S OKAY--I INSIST.
MANHATTAN.
38 MILES SOUTH OF INDIAN POINT.
WE'LL CATCH THE NEXT ONE.
YOU FOLKS HAVE A GREAT NIGHT. STAY DRY AND ENJOY YOUR SHOW!
THAT'S THE FOURTH TAXI YOU'VE GIVEN TO SOMEONE ELSE.
SORRY, DI, THEY LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE IN A HURRY. THESE BROADWAY SHOWS DON'T HOLD CURTAINS FOR ANYONE!
I WILL, HOWEVER, ADMIT THAT WALKING THE REST OF THE WAY WASN'T MY--
COME ON, THAT STORM--

--CAME OUT OF NOWHERE.
SCREEEECH
I'M OFF DUTY YA CRAZY--
KKRRRUMMBBBBBB
THIS IS NEW YORK. THERE'S NO WAY THAT TREMOR WAS NATURAL--AND I FEEL THIS SUDDEN STORM ISN'T EITHER.
I CAN HEAR A DISTINCT SIREN NORTH OF HERE.
POLICE RADIOS ARE SQUAWKING WITH CHATTER ABOUT INDIAN POINT NUCLEAR POWER PLANT.
DATE NIGHT OVER.

WAAAIL
WOOO WOOO
DIANA?
OFF DUTY TAXI OFF DUTY
LEX
DIANA?
WHERE DID YOU GO?
DIANA?
YOUR JACKET...
DIANA? WHERE ARE YOU?

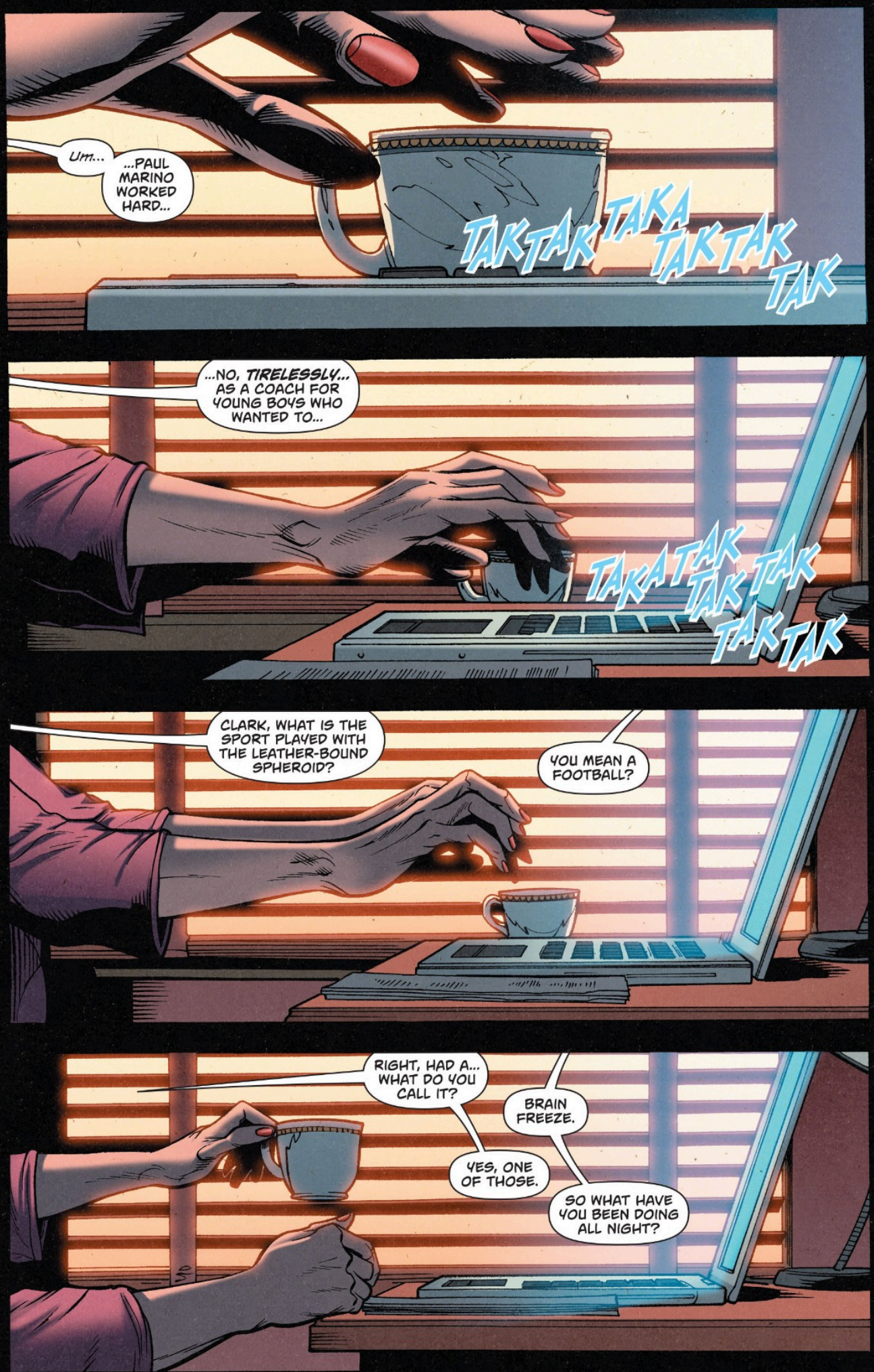

GOOM
NOW, AMAZON, LET'S COMPLETE YOUR DESTINY AS WE--
HNN
FWIPP

WE BOTH KNEW SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT FROM THE START.
EVEN SUPERMAN WAS SUSPICIOUS--AND HE TRUSTS EVERYBODY!
I CAN PRACTICALLY TASTE THE MAGIC ON YOU NOW.
RRRN
YOU THINK THIS IS ABOUT CLARK?
I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT THAT FOOL FOR A SECOND.
YOU CAN'T HIDE IT ANY LONGER!
WHAMM
ARGHH
YOUR SUIT.
AHH.
MARVELOUS.
THE ONE THING WE NEED TO CHANGE IT ALL.

ZZRAPP
I DON'T NEED A MAGIC BALL OF TWINE TO TELL ME YOU'RE LYING.
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CARE ABOUT *MORE* THAN FINDING OUT MY SECRETS.
ZZRAPP
IT'S THE *ONE* THING WE DO HAVE IN COMMON!
ZZRAPP
ZZRAPP
BUT WHILE I'M STILL FIGURING OUT *WHO* I AM...
...LET ME SHOW YOU EXACTLY...
ZZRAPP

...WHY I AM!
ZZZRRRAKK
AAGHHH!
KRAKK
SSKRRRAK
...HNN...

No...
He's stronger than I calculated.
If I stay...
I lose.
Then this isn't the battle.
Survive.
WWWMMM
Live today.
Win tomorrow.


Um...
...PAUL MARINO WORKED HARD...
TAKTAK TAKA TAKTAK TAK
...NO, TIRELESSLY... AS A COACH FOR YOUNG BOYS WHO WANTED TO...
TAKATAK TAK TAK TAKTAK
CLARK, WHAT IS THE SPORT PLAYED WITH THE LEATHER-BOUND SPHEROID?
YOU MEAN A FOOTBALL?
RIGHT, HAD A... WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
BRAIN FREEZE.
YES, ONE OF THOSE.
SO WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING ALL NIGHT?

I WAS HELPING.
THAT'S WHERE I WENT.
DIANA...
YOU VANISHED.
YOU SPENT ALL NIGHT ON THIS?
PEOPLE WERE DISPLACED AFTER THE EXPLOSION.
I WANTED THEIR NAMES.
I DIDN'T WANT THEM TO BECOME NUMBERS IN A REPORT.
YOU WENT BACK THERE, DIDN'T YOU?
I COULDN'T WALK AWAY.
YOU LEFT YOUR JACKET.
I THOUGHT SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU.
I'M SORRY.
NEXT TIME...
TELL ME.
WAS IT WORTH IT?
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT SOMEBODY NEEDED TO REMEMBER THEM.

WHO WAS IT?
I CAN'T TELL HIM.
NOT YET.
DIANA?
NOTHING SERIOUS.
JUST A COUPLE BANK ROBBERS.
DOWN NEAR ARKHAM.
BANK ROBBERS?
THE WORLD'S LESS EXCITING THAN YOU THINK.

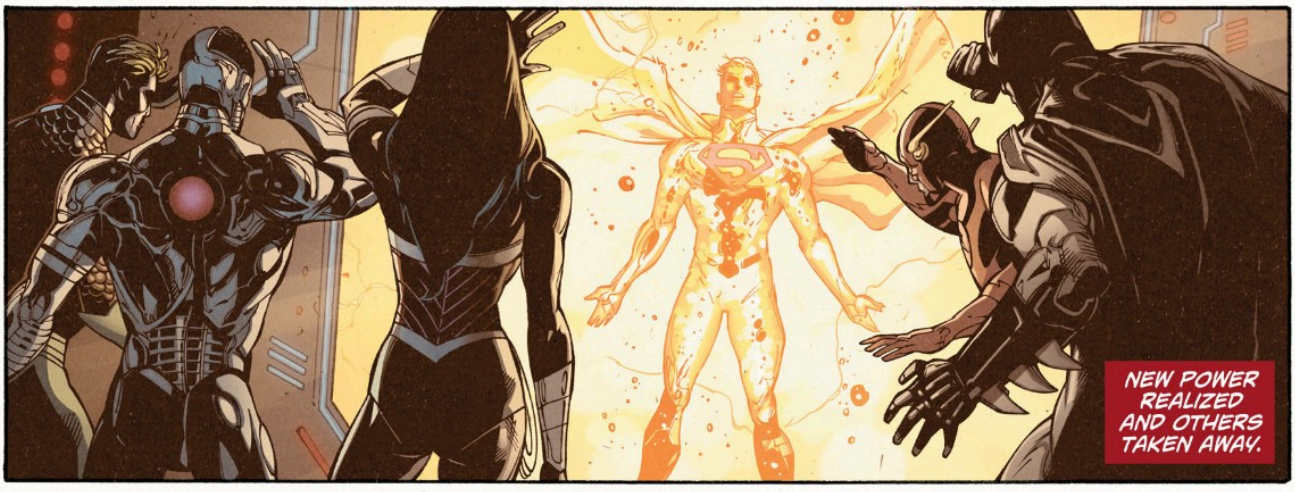
S.T.A.R. LABORATORIES
YOU REALLY PUT THIS THING THROUGH HELL.
YOU SHOULD SEE THE OTHER GUY.
YOU KNOW...
THAT USUALLY MEANS YOU'RE ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING.
WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE IT OBVIOUS FOR THEM, DO WE?
...CLARK.
THAT'S ACTUALLY BEAUTIFUL.

WELL?
LOOKS GOOD ON YOU.
BESIDES...
NOW PEOPLE MIGHT STOP CALLING YOU SUPERWOMAN.
THAT'S NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN.

CHAPTER FIVE

A FRIENDSHIP FORGED.

OUR LOVE BORN.


NEW POWER REALIZED AND OTHERS TAKEN AWAY.

HIS SECRET REVEALED.

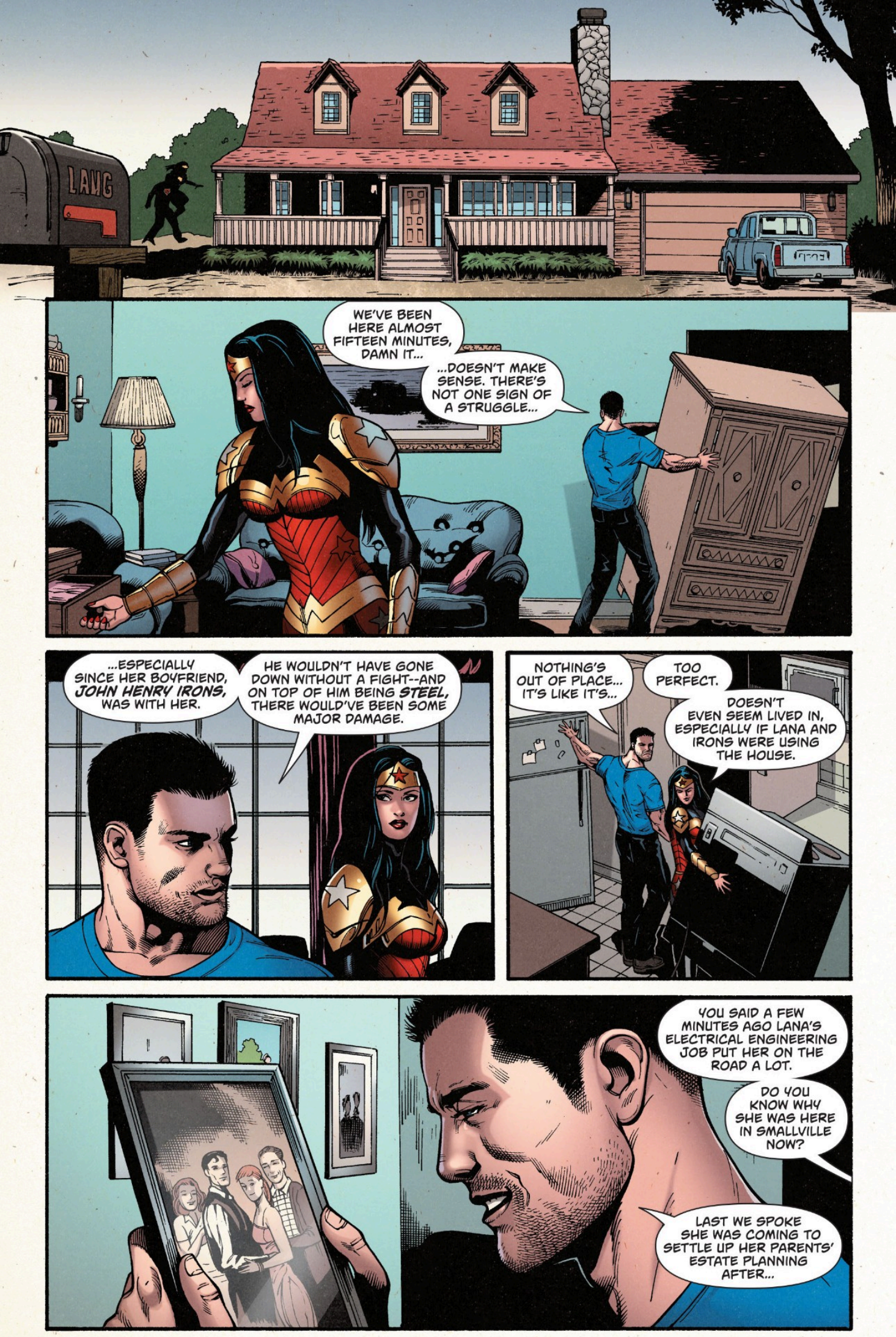
VVMMMMM
VVMMMMM
3:00 AM
VVMMMMM
CLARK, IT'S THREE A.M., YOU HAVE A PHONE CALL.
SMALLVILLE AREA CODE. WAKE UP.
...I'M UP... I'M UP...
LANA-- WHAT IS IT-- EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
--SOMEONE OR SOMETHING'S IN MY PARENTS' HOUSE--
--THEY'VE DONE SOMETHING TO JOHN AND THEY'RE--
LANA-- ARE YOU--

Big Red
Call Ended
00:05
CLARK? TALK TO ME. WHAT'S GOING ON?
SMALLVILLE.
I NEED TO GET TO SMALLVILLE, DIANA.
NOW.
THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
REMEMBER, IF ONE OF US CAN FLY...

...THEN BOTH OF US CAN FLY.

DIANA-- PLEASE-- GO FASTER.
BUT YOUR BODY AND LUNGS-- WITH YOUR POWERS NOT AT FULL STRENGTH-- CAN THEY HANDLE THE SPEED AND AIR PRESSURE?
I DON'T CARE, EVERY MINUTE COUNTS.
I CAN'T LET HER DOWN AGAIN.
I WON'T.

WHO WON'T YOU LET DOWN AGAIN?
THE "BIG RED" ON YOUR PHONE SCREEN?
LANA LANG.
MY FIRST REAL GIRLFRIEND...
...SHE HELPED ME DEAL WITH MY POWERS.
AND WAS MY ROCK WHEN MY PARENTS DIED.
SHE KNEW YOU WERE SUPERMAN ALL THESE YEARS?
YEAH...
...WAY BEFORE THE REST OF THE PLANET FOUND OUT.
SOUNDS LIKE SHE REALLY MEANS A LOT TO YOU.
SOMEONE I LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING.


LANG
WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST FIFTEEN MINUTES, DAMN IT...
...DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. THERE'S NOT ONE SIGN OF A STRUGGLE...
...ESPECIALLY SINCE HER BOYFRIEND, JOHN HENRY IRONS, WAS WITH HER.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE GONE DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT--AND ON TOP OF HIM BEING STEEL, THERE WOULD'VE BEEN SOME MAJOR DAMAGE.
NOTHING'S OUT OF PLACE... IT'S LIKE IT'S...
TOO PERFECT.
DOESN'T EVEN SEEM LIVED IN, ESPECIALLY IF LANA AND IRONS WERE USING THE HOUSE.
YOU SAID A FEW MINUTES AGO LANA'S ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING JOB PUT HER ON THE ROAD A LOT.
DO YOU KNOW WHY SHE WAS HERE IN SMALLVILLE NOW?
LAST WE SPOKE SHE WAS COMING TO SETTLE UP HER PARENTS' ESTATE PLANNING AFTER...

...I WASN'T ABLE TO SAVE THEM FROM THE DOOMSDAY VIRUS.
YOU SEEM SO COMFORTABLE HERE, CLARK.
THERE'S A PART OF ME THAT WISHES YOU NEVER LEFT.
DEALING WITH THE CRAZINESS OF MY POWERS BACK THEN... SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SIMPLER TIME COMPARED TO WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW...
WHERE THE HELL IS SHE?!?
SKRAK
IT'S OKAY.
WE'LL FIND LANA AND IRONS.
OUR NEXT STEP IS TO HEAD INTO SMALLVILLE AND GATHER MORE INTEL.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND AFTER WHAT THIS TOWN'S BEEN THROUGH LATELY, WE NEED TO TRY AND STAY UNDER THE RADAR, LOOK A LOT LESS CONSPICUOUS.

WHERE WE HEADING?
THE BARBERSHOP.
THE THREE WISE MEN OUT FRONT KNOW ALL THE COMINGS AND GOINGS IN THIS TOWN...
MORNING, GENTLEMEN.
HEY THERE, CLARK.
WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?
BIG AL'S
DIANA.
DIDN'T THINK WE'D BE SEEING YOU SO SOON, WHAT WITH THE RECENT...REVELATIONS.
THERE'S IMPORTANT REASONS, BURT, WHY I COULDN'T TELL YOU ALL ABOUT BEING...
SUPERMAN. IT'S OKAY TO SAY IT OUT LOUD NOW, CLARK.
AND I PROMISE I WILL AT SOME POINT, BUT RIGHT NOW LANA'S MISSING AND--
SHE'S ONE OF MANY.
WHAT--WHO ELSE, MR. LANDERS?
AFE
WELL, AS YOU CAN SEE, SANTIAGO ISN'T KEEPING HIS USUAL CHAIR WARM, AND MRS. TAKAHARA DIDN'T MAKE IT INTO SCHOOL THIS MORNING EITHER, ALONG WITH A FEW OTHERS.
GOT US A TOWN HALL TONIGHT TO BEND SOME EARS AND FLAP SOME LIPS.

LOOK, WE'RE NOT SAYING WE DON'T TRUST YOU ANYMORE, CAUSE WE DO.
AND WE DON'T CARE WHERE YOU CAME FROM.
ONLY A FOOL CAN'T SEE THAT KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE IS WHAT YOU CARE MOST ABOUT.
YEAH, IT'S BEEN EASY TO SEE EVEN FROM WHEN YOU WERE A KID THAT YOU'VE GOT THE EYES AND HEART OF A GOOD MAN.
BUT ONE THING WE DO KNOW IS THAT A HELLUVA LOT OF BAD MOJO'S BEEN FOLLOWING YOU AROUND LATELY...
AND AS MUCH AS IT PAINS US TO EVEN SPEAK THESE WORDS...WELL...I THINK PUTTING SOME SPACE BETWEEN YOU AND SMALLVILLE IS WHAT'S BEST FOR THE FOLKS IN THIS TOWN RIGHT NOW, CLARK.
DOOMSDAY, BRAINIAC, ULTRA-HUMANITE...YOU'RE A TARGET AND IN TURN YOU'RE MAKING US A TARGET.
DON'T YOU THINK WE'VE EARNED SOME PEACE AND QUIET AROUND HERE, CLARK?
I DO, AND I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM, MISTER LANDERS.
I'LL GET OUR PEOPLE BACK.

I WAS HEADING HOME LATE LAST NIGHT...
...AND IT WAS RAINING DIRT.
FOUND THIS ON THE ROAD. FIGURED YOU MIGHT WANT IT.
KENT
KENT
WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU, DIANA. STAY CLOSE TO OUR FRIEND. HE'S GONNA NEED ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET.
YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT, BURT.
LET'S GO.
TIME TO FORGET THIS UNDER-THE-RADAR CRAP.
I COMPLETELY AGREE...
KENT
...SECRETS ONLY BELONG IN THE SHADOWS.
NO...

...THEY TOOK IT.

THEY TOOK IT ALL.
MY PARENTS' HOME...
...THE BARN...
...EVERYTHING...
...LIKE MY FAMILY WAS NEVER HERE.
SKRRUNCH
AND IF THEY RIPPED AWAY THIS LAND THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE...

Hmm.
THEY TORE THIS AWAY, TOO.
FUMP
INITIATE PROTOCOL AC638.
WHOSE LAND IS THIS?
WASHINGTON AND EMILY KENT-- GRANDPARENTS ON MY FATHER'S SIDE.
THEY DIED IN A CAR ACCIDENT WHEN I WAS TWELVE.
MY PARENTS SOLD THE LAND A LITTLE LATER.
I'M NOT SANCTIONING THE PROTOCOL WITHOUT AN EXECUTIVE AUDIO AND PRESENT-DAY PASSWORD CONFIRMATION.
ON ITS WAY SHORTLY.
WELL, IF IT'S NOT, THE HORSES STAY IN THE BARN, UNDERSTOOD?
OF COURSE.

SOMEWHERE OVER LOUISIANA.
THIS IS BR1 REQUESTING CLEARANCE APPROACH.
AFFIRMATIVE, BR1. YOU ARE A GO.
YAHH
SKASSH
SORRY FOR THE UNANNOUNCED VISIT--
--BUT YOUR CHAT-LINE TO BELLE REVE IS GOING SILENT FOR A WHILE UNTIL I GET WHAT I CAME FOR.

NOW EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO PAY A VISIT TO YOUR CARGO HOLD.
BLAMM BLAMM BLAMM
BLAMM BLAMM
YOU DO REALIZE THAT HURTS, RIGHT?
KRYK
MAINTAIN YOUR SPEED AND ALTITUDE.

WE GOT A BOGIE ON THE STARBOARD SIDE COMING--
BRATTA BRATTA
SHUNKK
--IN FAST.
BRATTA
PLEASE STOP FIRING THOSE WEAPONS--
SKKLANG
BRATTA BRATTA
--IN SUCH CLOSE QUARTERS--

--WE WOULDN'T WANT ANYBODY GETTING WOUNDED NOW, WOULD WE?
NO, MA'AM.
TAKE A SEAT.
YES, MA'AM.
WE'RE READY TO PROCEED.
GOOD.
GIVE ME THE CODE FOR THE LOCKBOX.
I CAN'T DO THAT.
AND I RESPECT THAT, BUT YOU DO REALIZE WE WILL TEAR IT OPEN AT THE TAXPAYERS' EXPENSE?
I RESPECT THAT.
OKAY, TAKE IT APART.
KRUNCH

RRRGHFF
LONG TIME NO SEE, PARASITE.
RRRGFF
YEAH, I MISSED YOU TOO.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM?
WE'RE GOING FOR A RIDE...

...WE'LL TRY NOT TO BREAK HIM!
GAARRR
KOOOM
GRRAAAH
SKRRK
YOU THINK SOME SPECIAL MITTENS ARE GOING TO KEEP ME FROM SUCKING YOU BOTH DRY?!?
YOU'LL BE BEGGING ME FOR DEATH-- PLEADING WITH ME TO END YOUR LIVES!
COULD YOU PLEASE SHUT UP FOR A MOMENT?
FRAK!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING-- WHY DID YOU OF ALL PEOPLE BREAK ME OUT?!?
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!?
KRAMM
YOU HEARD THE LADY, SHUT UP FOR A SEC!
SKASHH
RRRGH
I WANT YOU TO LISTEN CLOSELY.
DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?
SKASHH
GOOD.
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A YES.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, PARASITE?
LET'S MAKE A DEAL.

WHAT KIND OF DEAL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!?
THE KIND OF DEAL THAT HELPS US BOTH.
AND JUST HOW ARE YOU GONNA HELP ME, HUH?
BY KICKING MY ASS AROUND SOME MORE AND THROWING ME IN A CELL?
UNGH.
WOULD WE HAVE BROKEN YOU OUT OF THE CHOPPER IF WE WERE JUST GOING TO LOCK YOU UP AGAIN?
HRRM...
YOU MAY NOT BE AS TASTY AS BEFORE--BUT YOUR GIRLFRIEND--SHE'S GOT A WHOLE OTHER TYPE OF LIFE-FORCE ENERGY THAT'S OFF THE--

TALK.

KRAK K

IT... IT HURTS.

YOU'RE ONE OF BRAINIAC'S EXPERIMENTS.

SHE WAS TAKEN.

BY BRAINIAC.

SO YOU *DO KNOW* WHERE SHE IS.

I KNOW *MANY* THINGS.

THEN START TALKING.

HOW MANY CLONES LIKE YOU ARE THERE?

WHAT ARE YOU BEING USED FOR?

WE AREN'T CLONES. WE ARE... *UPGRADES.*

IF I TELL YOU...

WILL YOU LET ME DIE FIRST?

UPGRADES TO WHAT?

AND WHERE IS LANA LANG?

TELL ME AGAIN ABOUT THIS ENERGY SOURCE.
IT'S BIG AND IT'S DANGEROUS.
AND YOU'RE BOTH JUST GONNA STAND BY AND LET ME CONSUME IT ONCE I FIND IT?
TO A POINT, YES.
AND THEN YOU'RE JUST GONNA LET ME STROLL OFF INTO THE SUNSET, HMM?
I AM.
I WANT ASSURANCES.
AND I WANT TO HEAR WONDER CHICK'S PRETTY LIPS SAY IT--
BAMM
BAMM

LISTEN, FOOL, WHEN SUPERMAN OFFERS YOU A DEAL YOU SAY--
--YES!
RAVENOUS

ENOUGH.

WHERE IS LANA?

YOU STILL THINK SHE'S A PRISONER.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

BRAINIAC DOESN'T COLLECT PEOPLE.

HE STUDIES THEM.

ANSWER THE QUESTION.

THE WHAT?

SHE WAS TAKEN TO THE ARCHIVE.

THE PLACE WHERE WORLDS GO TO DIE.

ARE WE ON THE SAME PAGE?
...YES...
SPEAK UP.
YES.
BUT IF I'M GOING TO HELP YOU FIND THIS POWER SOURCE, YOU GOTTA DO TWO THINGS.
FIRST, TAKE THIS JACKET OFF ME.
SECOND?
SKLANG
GET UP. YOU CAN REST LATER.
I'M NOT RESTING.
LOOK AT ME--HOW THIN I AM--DEPLETED.
I NEED AN INFUSION OF ENERGY TO DO WHAT YOU NEED ME TO DO.
WHICH BRINGS US TO OUR SECOND THING.
TAKE THAT GLOVE OFF AND TAKE MY HAND.
A FEW SECONDS OF WHAT SHE'S GOT SHOULD BE PLENTY.

HOW LONG?
FIVE SECONDS OR SO SHOULD DO IT.
MAYBE THIS ISN'T A GOOD IDEA.
IT'S FINE.
REST ASSURED, PARASITE, IF YOU DON'T LET GO OF MY HAND IN FIVE SECONDS I WILL CUT YOUR HEAD OFF, EVEN WITH MY DYING BREATH.
CLEAR?
CRYSTAL.
GOOD. THEN LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
RRGHHH!
AAHHHH!
...FIVE... FOUR... THREE...
AAAHHH!
...TWO... ONE...
RRRGHH!

...ZERO...
LET HER GO, PARASITE, OR I'LL--
--SLICE OFF YOUR DAMN ARM!
AGHHH!
MMRRM!
SWISSH
DIANA-- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
...YES...LITTLE DISORIENTED... THAT'S ALL...
--LIKE NOTHING--I'VE EVER--FELT BEFORE--
--MY BAD-- CAUGHT UP IN THE MOMENT--WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
WE'VE PUT SOME GAS IN YOUR TANK, GET BUSY TRACKING NOW--
--OR WE GET BUSY AGAIN CONVINCING YOU TO.

NOT AGAIN WITH THE KNEES.
STAND BACK--NEED TO GET A CLEAR INITIAL READ--
--WITHOUT ANY INTERFERENCE.
KOOOM
HRRRMM...
RGHH...
...I WAS ABLE TO TAP INTO THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD...
WHERE?
NORTHEAST OF US...I THINK I'VE FOUND THAT POWER SOURCE...
AND?
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET THERE.

BRAINIAC JOURNAL. TONIGHT'S SUNSET WILL COME AT 5:26 P.M., AT 257 DEGREES WEST.

AVERAGE NIGHTTIME TEMPERATURE WILL BE 6 DEGREES CELSIUS, WITH NORTHWEST WINDS AT 10 MILES PER HOUR.

AT 8:35 P.M., I WILL COMMAND ONE OF MY BRAINIACS TO IMMOLATE HIMSELF.

SO I MAY SPEND THREE MINUTES WATCHING HIM DIE.

YES, BRAINIAC.

YES, BRAINIAC.

WATCHING A PIECE OF MYSELF AS IT BLACKENS AND SHRIVELS.

SATURN WILL BE VISIBLE IN THE NIGHT SKY AT 9:03 P.M.

LATER.

HE IS AN *ALIEN.* NOT EVEN OF THIS WORLD.

TELL ME, *PEACEMAKER SMITH,* HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU *FEEL?*

AAAIAIAIARRRGGGGH!

GOOD. PAIN IS PROGRESS.

YOUR *IMPLANTS* ARE RESPONDING NICELY.

WHAT...THE HELL IS THIS? PUNISHMENT FOR PAKISTAN?

JUST KILL ME ALREADY!

QUITE THE CONTRARY, PEACEMAKER. DIRECTOR AL GHUL WAS VERY *IMPRESSED* WITH YOUR WORK IN THE FIELD.

YOU'RE BEING TRUSTED WITH A VERY SPECIAL DEPLOYMENT. TO WHAT IS SOON TO BE THE MOST DANGEROUS WAR ZONE ON THE PLANET.

A PLACE CALLED *KANSAS.*

WE'VE COME OVER 800 MILES.
YOU SURE THIS IS THE PLACE?
YES.
YOU SAID THAT ABOUT THE LAST TWO.
THIS IS KENTUCKY.
SPLASH
THIS IS IT.
WHERE?
OUT THERE.
DOWN DEEP.
UNDER THE WATER.
MMM... I CAN TASTE THE POWER... A DELECTABLE RESIDUE...
HOPE YOU'RE A GOOD SWIMMER.
I'M NOT GOING WITH YOU.
YES, YOU ARE.
I'VE GOT A FEAR OF DROWNING.
NOT TO WORRY, THE LACK OF OXYGEN WILL KILL YOU FIRST.

EAST SIDE OF ISLAND CLEAR.
NO SIGN OF ANY--
GRRAAA!
SPLARSH
TRYING TO CHANGE INTO BLACK HOLES, ARE YA?
HEARD ABOUT YOUR LITTLE TRICK!
ALL YOU'RE CHANGING INTO IS FOOD!
ENOUGH, PARASITE.
FEED ON--
FWWIP
I SAID ENOUGH!

SNRFF SNRFF...
--NEARBY-- THERE'S MORE ENERGY--
SHRKK SHRRK
--SO MUCH MORE--
--RIGHT UNDER OUR FEET--
WE SPOKE ABOUT THIS--I DON'T WANT YOU TO ACT LIKE A SHIELD, DIANA.
SHUSH.
LADIES FIRST.
--DOWN-- DOWN-- DOWN--
QUIET.
--HERE-- HERE-- HERE--
--BEHIND THIS-- BEHIND THIS-- BEHIND THIS--
--SOMEONE'S RINGING MY DINNER BELL--

FIRESTORM.

AND ALL THE CRIMINALS FROM STEEL'S FACILITY.

YES, WONDER WOMAN, AND ALL READY TO DO MY BIDDING--

--THANKS TO THE SURGICALLY IMPLANTED DEVICES IN THEIR HEADS.

I'M SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED BY YOUR FULL-FRONTAL APPROACH.

I HAD PREPARED A MYRIAD OF GAUNTLETS FOR A CLANDESTINE UNDERWATER INSERTION IF YOU DISCOVERED MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME.

YOU'RE A LONG WAY FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. BEING CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T HOLD YOUR INTEREST, HMM?

WORKING WITH THE PRESIDENT WAS JUST A STEPPING STONE TO BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS.

I'M PLAYING A LONG GAME THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO FATHOM, SUPERMAN, AND NOW THAT YOU, WONDER WOMAN AND PARASITE, HAVE MADE YOURSELVES AVAILABLE AGAIN, I'LL HAPPILY INGEST YOUR LIFE FORCE.

SHOW YOURSELF.

NOW WHY WOULD I PUT MYSELF IN JEOPARDY AT THIS JUNCTURE?

WE MADE A DEAL--

TAKE THIS DAMN LEASH OFF AND LET ME BE!

I'LL WAIT UNTIL THE SMOKE CLEARS...

AND USE YOUR LIFELESS HUSKS AS KINDLE FOR THE PYRE I'M GETTING READY TO BURN!

GRRRAAAARR!
UGNN!
WHAM
KRAKK
RGNN!

I APPLAUD YOUR PRINCIPLES, EVEN IF I FIND THEM NAÏVE.

KEEP THE FIGHTING AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

OFF-BALANCE AND CHAOTIC SERVES US BETTER.

CHOK

OPEN HEARTS AND COMMITMENT ARE SO RARE THESE DAYS.

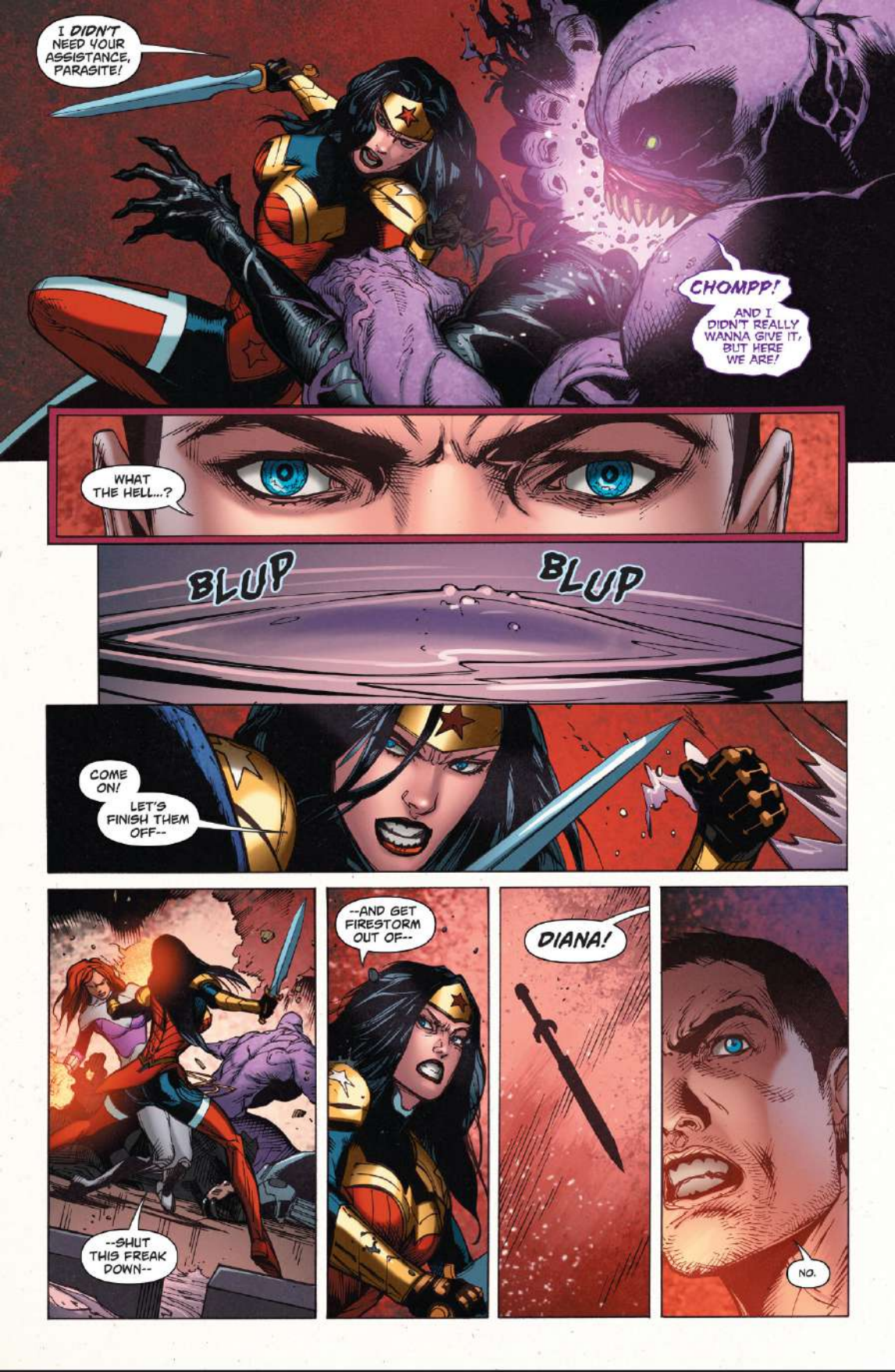
SO DESPERATE TO SHUT ME DOWN THAT YOU'VE EVEN RESORTED--

--TO ALLOWING A SUPER-LIEGEUT TO JOIN YOUR MISSION!

HRRRN...

GET AWAY FROM--

--MY MEAL TICKET!
SKLOOM
THANKS FOR THE SAVE, PARASITE!
DON'T THANK ME. WE'RE ALL PART OF THE SAME TEAM.
FOR NOW.
PUT THESE POWERED CRIMINALS DOWN HARD AND FAST--
--AND SHOW NO MERCY FOR THESE LAB-CREATED--
--BLACK HOLE CREATURES!


I DIDN'T NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE, PARASITE!
CHOMPP!
AND I DIDN'T REALLY WANNA GIVE IT, BUT HERE WE ARE!
WHAT THE HELL...?
BLUP
BLUP
COME ON!
LET'S FINISH THEM OFF--
--SHUT THIS FREAK DOWN--
--AND GET FIRESTORM OUT OF--
DIANA!
NO.

...DIANA...

...CAN YOU HEAR ME?

...BARELY...

...TAKING...ALL MY STRENGTH...

...LET STRENGH SUIT...

...CONTROL ME...

YOUR POWER LEVELS ARE OFF THE CHART, WONDER WOMAN.

I DIDN'T THINK I COULD CONTAIN AND DRAIN SOMEONE SO... GODLY.

BUT I GUESS NEVER SAY NEVER.

AIIIEEE

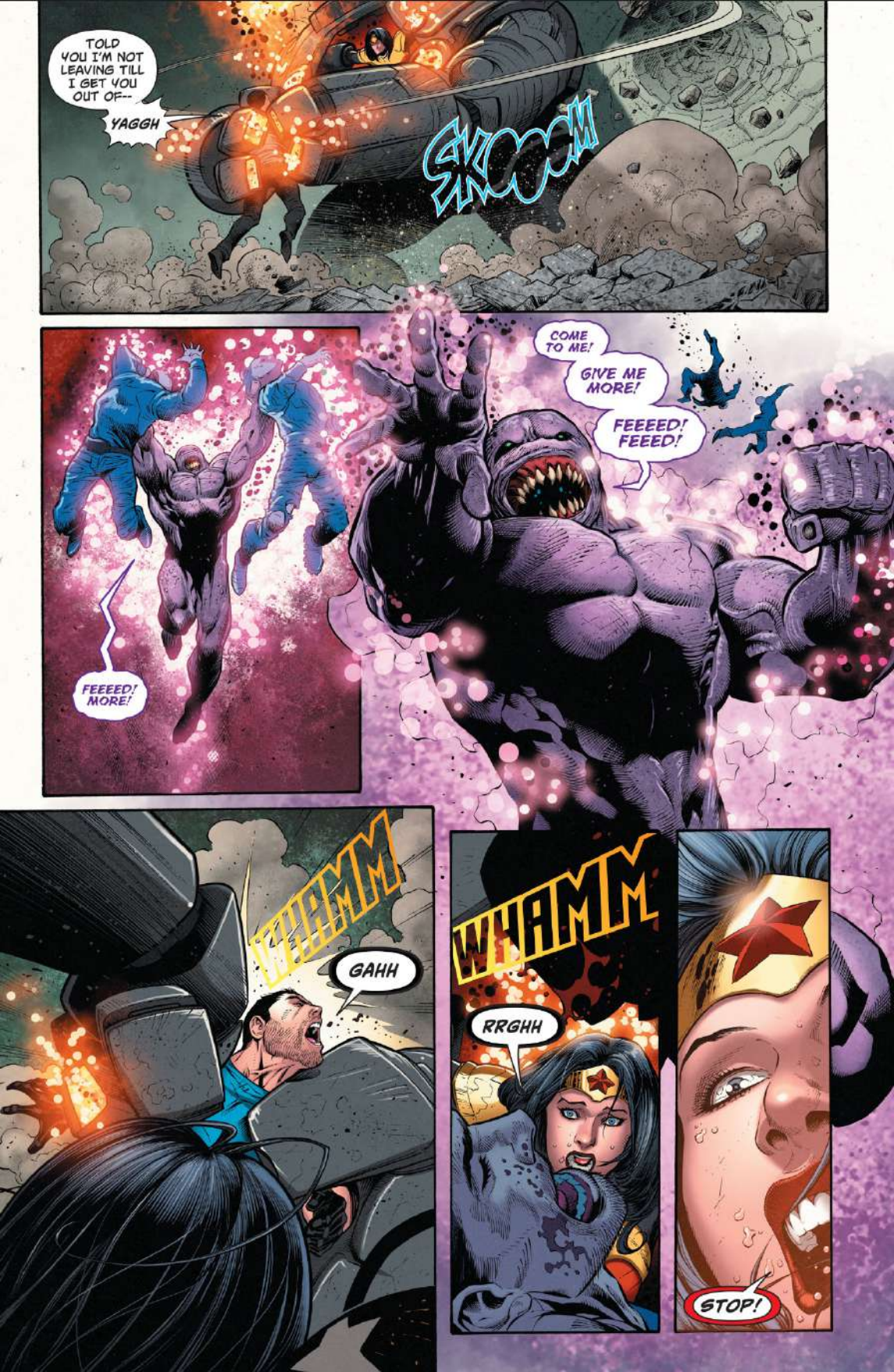
KEEP COMING AT ME, YOU BASTARDS, AND I'LL KEEP SUCKING THE LIFE OUTTA YA!

ARRGH

POWER HUNGRY

CLARK-- NO!
UNGFF
SSLAMMM
YOU-- HAVE TO-- PUT SOME DISTANCE-- BETWEEN US!
THIS THING--IS GETTING STRONGER--
NOT LEAVING YOU IN THERE..
ARGHH
KRAKRAKRAK
--NO MATTER WHAT!
BEND, GET OUT--
KRAK KRAK KRAK
--OF MY DAMN HEAD NOW!

GRRN
YOU CAN BREAK OUT OF THIS DAMN SUIT, DIANA!
FOCUS ON MY VOICE!
FIGHT OFF WHATEVER BEND'S DOING TO YOUR MIND!
CLARK!
SKRAKOOM
I'M STILL HERE!
IT'S NOT SHAKING ME THAT EASY!
MY BODY'S NOT RESPONDING TO WHAT I'M THINKING--
--IT'S LIKE I'M PARALYZED FROM THE NECK DOWN!
--NOT STRONG ENOUGH--
--TO CRACK THIS DAMN THING OPEN--
BAM BAM BAM
FORGET ME RIGHT NOW!
GO FIND BEND-- DISRUPT HIS POWER FEED!


TOLD YOU I'M NOT LEAVING TILL I GET YOU OUT OF--
YAGGH
SKOOOM
COME TO ME!
GIVE ME MORE!
FEEEED! FEEED!
FEEEED! MORE!
WHAMM
GAHH
WHAMM
RRGHH
STOP!

REMARKABLE.

I WONDERED HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE.

FOR SUPERMAN TO NOTICE.

FOR SUPERMAN TO BECOME AFRAID.

OF YOU.

IS IT?

THE ARMOR *ADAPTS.* IT LEARNS. IT IMPROVES.

YES.

THAT IS USUALLY HOW IT BEGINS.

WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

EVERY CIVILIZATION I HAVE STUDIED BELIEVED POWER *COULD* BE CONTROLLED.

EVERY CIVILIZATION WAS *WRONG.*

CLARK ISN'T APRAID OF POWER.

NO.

HE IS AFRAID OF *LOSING PEOPLE.*

YOU DON'T KNOW HIM.

I KNOW *ENOUGH.*

WHEN HE LOOKS AT THAT ARMOR...

HE IS NOT SEEING A WEAPON.

HE IS SEEING A *FUTURE.*

WHAT FUTURE?

ONE WHERE HE CANNOT PROTECT YOU.

...

TELL ME.

HAS HE ASKED YOU TO REMOVE IT YET?

NO.

HE WILL.

AND HOW EXACTLY DO YOU KNOW THAT?

BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS DO.

THE MOMENT POWER STOPS BELONGING TO THEM...

THEY CALL IT *DANGEROUS.*

THIS VILE LEECH OF YOURS SEEMS TO HAVE GROWN SOMEWHAT SICKLY.

GLKKK

GORGING HIMSELF ON ALL THE MANY BLACK HOLE BEINGS DOESN'T APPEAR TO AGREE WITH HIS SENSITIVE STOMACH.

I BELIEVE HE'S QUITE *VIBRATED* IN HIS OWN DISTINCT WAY.

SKLLSH

AND THE BRIGHT STAR THAT IS QUIETLY YOUNG FIREBORN FIRESTORM.

DISTINCT ON A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?

FIRESTORM WILL BE MY NUCLEAR TRIGGER, AND *TRANSMUTE* THE STORED ENERGY I'VE BEEN *SECRETLY* SIPHONING FROM MY FATHER'S SUPPLY...

...INTO MY EXACT DNA FORM SO I CAN ABSORB IT WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES...

klik

...AND I'LL FINALLY HAVE ALL THE POWERS I NEED TO COMBAT MY LOVING FATHER.

SPLARSH

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I NEED TO CHANGE INTO SOMETHING...

klikklik

...A BIT MORE POWERFUL.

SPSSSHH

ZOOOOP

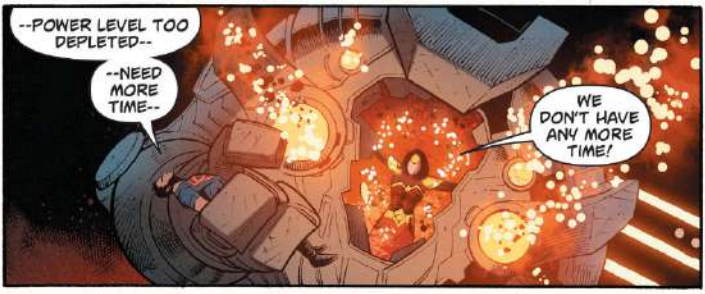
KLIK KLIK

KRAZZAAK

CLARK!
HE'S THROWN THE SWITCH--HE'S USING FIRESTORM TO POWER HIMSELF UP!
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING--I CAN'T MOVE--HE'S REMOTELY LOCKED THE LEGS ON THIS SUIT!

CLARK, WAKE THE HELL UP!
NOW!

YOU NEED TO BREAK OUT!
YOU CAN DO IT!
--CAN'T BUDGE--NO SPACE TO MOVE--ARMS PINNED TIGHT--


--POWER LEVEL TOO DEPLETED--
--NEED MORE TIME--
WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE TIME!

POWER OR NO POWER--
--YOU'RE STILL SUPERMAN, DAMN IT!

RRAAGHHHH
KRAKOOM
LEAN YOUR HEAD BACK-- I'M GOING TO--
YOU'VE ONLY GOT A FEW MINUTES AT BEST--
--HE'S UNDER THE WATER POWERING UP, BUT HE'S IN FLUX!
YOU HAVE TO STOP HIM, CLARK, BEFORE HIS DNA MATRIX IS COMPLETED AND HE'S FULLY POWERED UP!
HRGHH
LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS--
--WHEN HE GETS A POWER SURGE HE WASN'T COUNTING ON!
NARRGH

THERE HE IS.
THE TRANSMUTATION PROCESS IS GOING FULL TILT--
--ALL THE POWER HE'S SIPHONED FROM EVERYONE--
--HIS BODY IS CHANNELING IT--
--ABSORBING IT--
--ONLY CHANCE TO STOP HIM IS THAT BLACK HOLE OPENING UP--
--NO TIME FOR ANYTHING BUT A HAIL MARY AND PRAY IT WORKS--
AAAAAIEEEEE

FREEZATRON
DISTORTION AND DISRUPTION.
ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PULSE DETECTED.
HE DID IT!
COMPLETE SYSTEM FAILURE.
GRID SHUTDOWN.
CLARK DID IT!
SMAAASH!

TIME TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.
BUT NOT WITHOUT FIRESTORM!
SKASSH
ONLY A MATTER OF SECONDS...
FROOOSH
...TEAR THIS PLACE APART!
...BEFORE HIS ERRATIC ENERGY BLASTS...
BEND'S UNCONTROLLED POWERS ARE COMPROMISING THE STRUCTURE'S INTEGRITY!
WE HAVE TO GO-- NOW!

I'LL ROUND UP THE CRIMINALS, CLARK!
ARE YOU ABLE TO GET FIRESTORM AND PARASITE TOPSIDE BEFORE THIS THING BLOWS?!
WILL DO MY B--
SMASH
SMASH

BRAAKOOMM
WHAM
BAMM
FWAM

We almost died.

Diana...

Look at us.

Look at what this is doing.

Maybe it's time to stop.

Maybe it's time I stop.

Maybe I don't want to be Superman anymore.

Maybe I just want to be Clark.

...

For once.

Just Clark.

DO YOU SEE WHAT JUST HAPPENED?!

Diana--

NO.

You don't get to say that after today.

You don't get to almost die and then pretend none of this matters.

That's not what I'm--

I SAVED YOU.

Again.

And the first thing you say is that you want to quit.

I'm tired.

We're ALL tired.

You don't understand--

No.

You don't understand.

I watched you break yourself apart trying to save everyone.

I watched you give everything.

And now you're standing here talking about being Clark Kent.

Like Superman is somebody else.

Maybe he is.

Then who did I just save?

You forgot who you are.

You think Superman is the burden.

But Superman is the reason people are still alive.

And what if I can't do it anymore?

Then what am I supposed to do?

Carry you?

Carry all of this by myself?

Because that's what it feels like lately.

Diana...

I can't carry you like this.

YOU think I NEED this?!
I NEVER ASKED TO BE SUPERMAN!
MY PARENTS DIED FOR THIS SUIT!
THIS SYMBOL!
I AIN'T SUPERMAN!
I'M JUST A HUMAN!
I'M JUST CLARK!
CAN'T YOU JUST GET THAT THROUGH YOUR HEAD?!

...

Maybe I can't.

...

Because when I look at you...
I don't see Clark Kent.
I see the man who saves people.
The man who runs toward the fire.
The man who would die for strangers.

That's the problem.

No.
That's who you are.

You don't get to decide that.

Maybe not.
But I don't agree with how you walk away from it.
I can't stand still and do nothing. while the world dies.

And if that's the path you're choosing...
then it's not one I can walk with you.

Diana...

I can't carry you like this.

DIANA!

HE RAN.

HE KEPT RUNNING.

HE GATHERED WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIS SUIT.

HE HAD NO HOME.
NO PLAN.
ONLY PURPOSE.

HE BECAME A *NOMAD.*

THE WIND.
THE SUN.
THE SILENCE.
THEY CHANGED HIM.

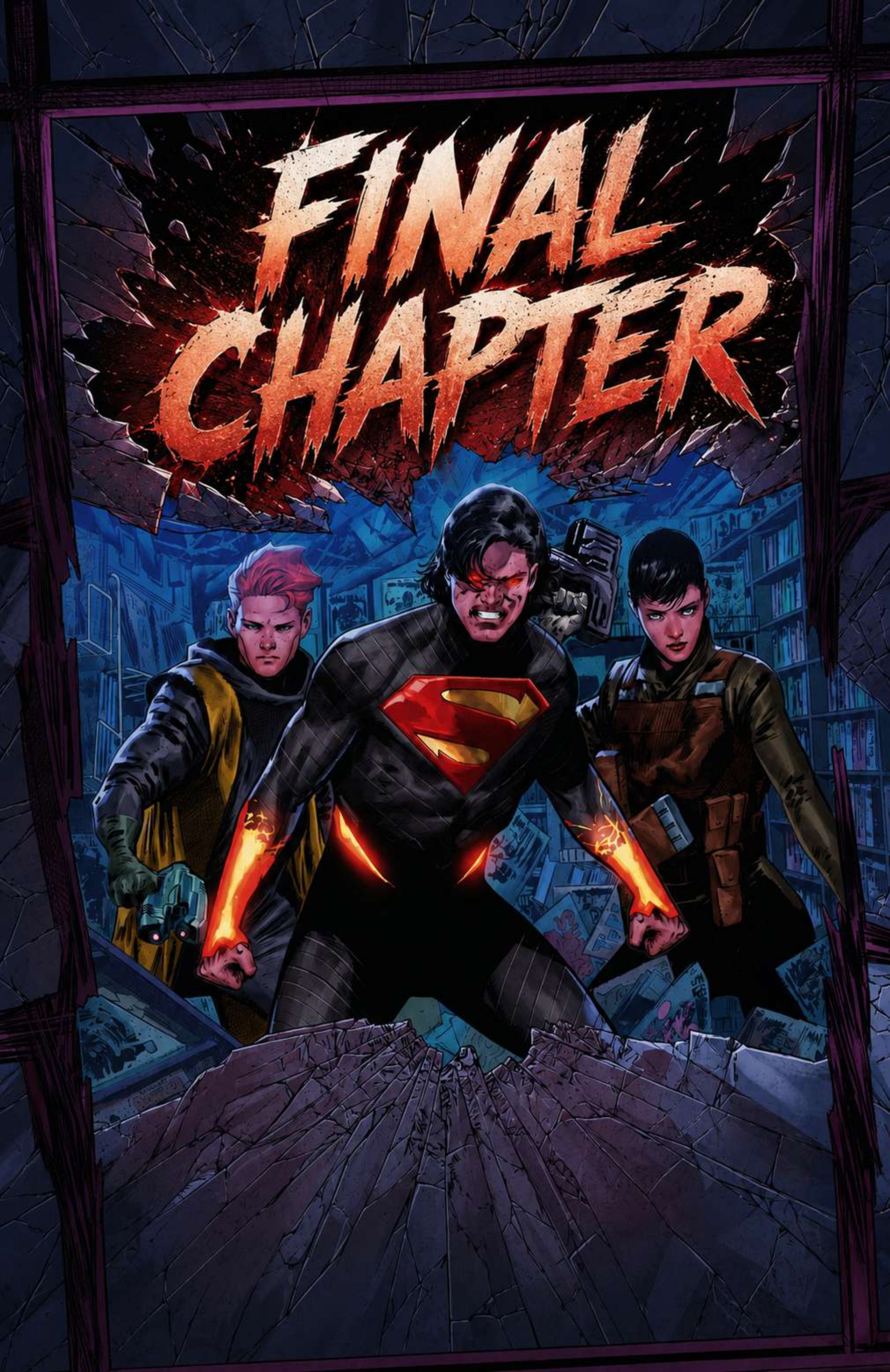
HIS HAIR GREW LONG.
HIS HEART GREW HARD.
HIS VISION GREW CLEAR.

HE ISN'T THEIR SYMBOL ANYMORE.

HE IS THE STANDARD.

ABSOLUTE SUPERMAN

FINAL CHAPTER



DEATH TO THE OPPRESSORS!

DIRECTOR AL GHUL? THEY'RE READY FOR YOU NOW.

SHALL I PATCH YOU THROUGH TO THE **EARNINGS CALL?**

RRRRGGGH!

SHUNK

BY ALL MEANS, UBU. WE MUSTN'T KEEP THE ***INVESTORS*** WAITING.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. YOU KNOW THE YEAR'S NUMBERS.

RECORD PROFITS, GROWTH IN EVERY QUARTER, EXPANSION INTO EIGHTEEN COUNTRIES. YOU'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE.

BUT HERE IS SOMETHING I SUSPECT YOU ***HAVEN'T*** HEARD.

KRRNCH

HHRRRGGH!

THAT IS THE SOUND OF AN ***ASSASSIN,*** SENT BY THOSE WHO WOULD DISMANTLE EVERYTHING WE'VE BUILT.

AN AGENT OF THE ***OMEGA MEN.***

KRRAK

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO LISTEN AS I ***KILL*** HIM.

IN CASE YOU'RE NOT ABLE TO HEAR, SIR, THE INVESTORS ARE **ROARING** THEIR APPROVAL.

AND **SECURITY** IS STANDING BY OUTSIDE YOUR QUARTERS.

THEY WON'T BE NEEDED.

HE'S JUST A ***MAN!***

KILL HIM AND WE SAVE THE PLANET!

I STARTED THIS COMPANY ALMOST ***TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO,*** WITH MONEY EARNED FROM CANADIAN FURS AND OTTAWA SCALPS.

NNGH!

THE LAZARUS CORPORATION'S FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WAS TO BUILD THE RAILROAD THAT TRANSFORMED THIS TOWN FROM A RICKETY FRONTIER FORT...

...TO THE ***CITY OF TOMORROW.***

I NEVER IMAGINED I MIGHT LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO FULFILL MY COMPANY'S ULTIMATE GOAL OF ***RESURRECTING THE WORLD.***

UUUGH!

KRRSH

YET HERE I AM.

HNNGH...

ACTIVATE ***LAZARUS PIT.*** MAXIMUM POWER.

FOR AS IT SAYS ON THE LETTERHEAD...

GAAARRGGH!

...***LAZARUS MEANS LIFE.***

I'D HEARD THE STORY WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

THE FANTASTICAL TALE OF A MAN ***RAISED*** FROM THE ***DEAD...*** BY THE ***SON OF GOD.***

THOUGH MY EARLY YEARS WOULD PROVE BEREFT OF ANYTHING ONE MIGHT CONSIDER A ***GODLY*** PURSUIT, I NEVER FORGOT THAT TALE.

AND IN TIME I REALIZED, WHERE THE COMMON MAN SAW PROGRESS AND INDUSTRY...

...ONLY I COULD SEE THE EARTH FOR THE ***MAGGOT-RIDDLED CARCASS*** IT WAS HEEDLESSLY ROTTING INTO.

HGHK!

IT WOULD FALL TO ME ALONE TO BRING THIS RAVAGED, OVERPOPULATED PLANET...

SHHHK

...***BACK TO LIFE.***

WITH THE ADVANCEMENTS BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH ***PROJECT BRAINIAC...*** THAT DAY OF ***RESURRECTION*** IS CLOSE AT HAND.

SOON LAZARUS SHALL RISE FROM HIS TOMB. REMADE. REINVIGORATED.

LIKE A ***NEWBORN BABE.***

GAHZ

A LIFETIME AGO, THE NAME ***RA'S AL GHUL*** STRUCK FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF THE MASSES AND THEIR MASTERS ALIKE.

THE ***DEMON'S HEAD,*** THEY CALLED ME.

BUT LIKE LAZARUS... I WAS REBORN.

YOU MAY CALL ME THE ***GOD'S HEAD*** NOW.

THE GOD WITH THE POWER TO HEAL THE LAME. TO RESTORE THE OLD.

TO SAVE THIS PLANET FROM THE BILLIONS OF LEECHES WHO WOULD BLEED IT DRY.

MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I HAVE NO ***SON*** THROUGH WHICH TO DO THIS.

WAAH?

NOT YET, I DON'T.

UNTIL NEXT QUARTER, MY DEAR FRIENDS OF THE ***LEAGUE OF SHAREHOLDERS...***

LAZARUS MEANS ***SALVATION.***

LAZARUS MEANS SUSTAINABILITY AND THE POWER OF ***SACRIFICE.***

LAZARUS

LAAAAAARRRGH!

OH MY GOD!

LAZARUS MEANS ***HOPE.***

LAZARUS

DAILY PLANET

LAZARUS CORP GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS.

THE CITY OF METROPOLIS.

SMALL VILLE, KANSAS

SOL...

NOT NOW.

YOU PEOPLE HAVE NO *SHAME.*

ARE YOU KIDDING? I'VE GOT MORE THAN I KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH.

BUT, UH, THAT'S NOT REALLY WHY I CAME HERE... *SUPERMAN.*

I'M FROM THE OMEGA MEN. I'VE BEEN SENT TO--

DOESN'T MATTER. WHATEVER IT IS, THE ANSWER WILL ALWAYS BE *NO.*

THAT GOES FOR THE *BOTH OF YOU.*

I'M SORRY TO DO THIS HERE. I REALIZE WHAT THIS TOWN MEANS TO YOU. OR WHAT IT *MIGHT'VE,* IF YOU'D BEEN ALLOWED TO STAY.

JUST BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY...I'M HERE ALONE. NOT AS AN AGENT OF LAZARUS. JUST AS ME.

LOIS LANE.

CLOSED

NOW OWNED BY LAZARUS CORP!

IF YOU THINK LAZARUS DOESN'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE AT EVERY SECOND OF THE DAY, YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEIR BRAINIAC ALGORITHM IS CAPABLE OF!

I KNOW FULL WELL WHAT YOU ***OMEGA MEN*** ARE CAPABLE OF, PAL! YOUR BOSS LADY PUT MY FATHER IN A WHEELCHAIR!

AND YOUR BOSS JUST TURNED A BLIND EYE TO ***23 DEAD BODIES*** IN...

ZARUS

WAIT... WHERE'D HE GO?

DAMN IT!

THREE YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A CHURCH DOWN THE STREET THAT CAUGHT FIRE! ONLY FOR THAT FIRE TO SOMEHOW ***FREEZE,*** SAVING EVERYONE INSIDE!

TWO YEARS AGO, A SMALLVILLE SCHOOL BUS WAS DRAGGED FROM A LAKE, WITH NO ONE AROUND!

LAST FALL, THE FERGUSON FAMILY ON HUTCHINSON ROAD SWORE THEY WERE PULLED TO SAFETY... FROM INSIDE A ***TORNADO!***

I KNOW WHY YOU KEEP COMING ***BACK*** HERE!

THE ***KENT*** FAMILY FARM! BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THEY WERE...THEY WERE ***LOVELY*** PEOPLE!

LAZARUS ***TOOK*** THAT FROM YOU!

SINCE THEN...YOU'VE BEEN ***SEARCHING*** FOR A PLACE TO ***BELONG!*** RUNNING FROM ONE CONTINENT TO ANOTHER!

I THINK YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO ***TRUST!***

AND I...I THINK THAT JUST MAYBE...

SUPERMAN? ARE YOU EVEN STILL ***HERE?***

SUPERMAN CAME BACK TO FIGHT FOR WHAT'S LEFT OF ***SMALLVILLE!***

LOOK AT THIS PLACE! LAZARUS BOUGHT UP EVERY INCH OF IT, JUST SO THEY COULD SHUT IT DOWN!

ONLY JOBS ARE IN THEIR CHICKEN PLANTS AND SUPERFARMS, WHERE THESE PEOPLE GET PAID ***LAZARUS CRYPTO*** TO WORK THE SAME LAND THEY USED TO OWN!

THAT'S THE ***MASTER*** YOU SERVE, LANE! SUPERMAN WOULD BE ***INSANE*** TO TRUST YOU!

I'M NOT ABOUT TO STAND HERE AND BE LECTURED BY SOME...SOME ***TERRORIST*** IN A...A ***STUPID MASK!***

OH BOY, NOW YOU'RE REALLY IN DENIAL! ***MY MASK IS COOL, AND YOU KNOW IT!***

THESE TWO ARE PERFECT REPRESENTATIONS OF THEIR PLANET'S **DOMINANT PHYSIOLOGY.** PRODIGIOUS MOUTHS AND DIMINUTIVE EARS.

KAL-EL, NEITHER OF THESE INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE--

GAGGGH!

FWOOOSH

PEACEMAKER SMITH!

I'M HERE BECAUSE OF HIM!

AND THE INNOCENT PEOPLE HE ***MURDERED*** IN PAKISTAN!

I CAME HERE...IN HOPES OF...

...OF ***STOPPING*** MYSELF... FROM...

KRAK

...FROM...

...KILLING HIM.

OH GOD!

HE'S *HIT!*

DO YOU SEE A *SNIPER?!* WHO THE HELL'S FIRING?!

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!

WHO DO YOU *THINK?!*

ITALIA

WE HAVE TO GET HIM OUT OF THE STREET.

YOU'RE NOT TOUCHING HIM!

HE'S BEEN SHOT IN THE CHEST! HE'S BLEEDING OUT!

YOUR PEOPLE DID THIS!

AND ***YOU*** LED THEM HERE!

LOOK...YOU AND I, WE'RE FROM OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM. WE DON'T AGREE ON ANYTHING AND NEVER WILL.

EXCEPT FOR ***THIS.***

US

IF WE STAND HERE ARGUING...WHILE THIS ***MIRACLE*** DIES AT OUR FEET...

...WE WILL NEVER LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO STOP REGRETTING THE GREATEST ***FAILURE*** OF OUR LIVES.

HELP ME GET HIM OUT OF HERE. ***PLEASE.***

α

BLOOD TRAIL! HEADED THAT WAY!

SEARCH THOSE BUILDINGS!

BELAY THAT ORDER!

ALL PEACEMAKERS, SECURE THE PERIMETER. WASTE WHOEVER'S HELPING HIM.

BUT ANY OF YOU HUMPS SO MUCH AS *TOUCH* SUPERMAN...

...I WILL FEED YOU YOUR OWN DAMN RIFLE. *BUTT FIRST!*

YOU HEARD *CAPTAIN SMITH!* MOVE OUT!

HE CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR, SIR. LOOKED LIKE YOU HIT HIM CENTER MASS.

MAY I SAY, SIR, IT'S AN *HONOR* TO BE ON THIS OPERATION WITH YOU.

WHAT YOU'VE DONE...IN THE NAME OF *PEACE.* TO A LOT OF US HERE...

WELL, YOU'RE AN *INSPIRATION,* SIR.

OH, I'M JUST GETTING STARTED.

ESTABLISHING CONNECTION WITH... RECENTLY FIRED BULLET.

CLOSED
LANG FAMILY DRUGS
NOW OWNED BY
LAZARUS CORP

NO EXIT WOUND. BULLET'S STILL *INSIDE* HIM.

I THOUGHT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *BULLET-PROOF.*

HE WAS. I'VE SEEN SLUGS BOUNCE OFF HIM LIKE SPITBALLS.

WHAT THE HELL DID THEY *SHOOT* HIM WITH?

LAZARUS MEANS *INNOVATION,* RIGHT?

KAL, I AM HAVING GREAT DIFFICULTY EXTRACTING THE PROJECTILE.

ITS COMPOSITION APPEARS TO BE... NO, THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE.

DON'T CARE WHAT IT IS. JUST... *GET IT OUT,* SOL.

HE WANTS *OUT?* IS THAT WHAT HE SAID? *I* CAN GET YOU OUTTA HERE, SUPERMAN. THE *OMEGA MEN* CAN--

NO, YOU'RE NOT TAKING HIM! YOUR PEOPLE ARE *KILLERS!*

YOUR PEOPLE ARE KILLERS! AND THEY'RE *RIGHT OUTSIDE!*

IF WE DON'T GET HIM OUT OF SMALLVILLE, THEY'RE GONNA--

BULLET... LOCATED.

GARRRGGGH!

THERE YOU ARE!

KRRSH

I BET YOU REMEMBER ME *NOW!*

SMASH

LET ME *HEAR* IT, TOUGH GUY.

GIVE ME A *GOOD* ONE. JUST LIKE THE REST OF THOSE *ANIMALS* BACK IN *PAKISTAN.*

KRKK

I WANNA HEAR YOU *LAUGH!*

PEACEMAKER SMITH'S ABILITIES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY **UPGRADED.**

AND THE **SOLAR ENERGY** IN YOUR CELLS IS BEING RAPIDLY **DEPLETED** BY THE BULLET'S RADIATION.

GRRROGH!

KAL-EL, THIS FIGHT COULD **KILL** YOU.

GNNRRGH!

I MUST END THIS QUICKLY. ATTEMPTING TO DISABLE HIS IMPLANTS.

FKKRKLE

GAAGGH!

KRRRNCH

KAL-EL, THE BULLET...IS OF **KRYPTONIAN** ORIGIN.

DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT LAZARUS ***MEANS?!***

BRAINIAC SHOWED ME EVERYTHING!

I SERVE THE WILL OF ***GOD!***

THE PLANET'S **IRRADIATED REMAINS.**

KAL, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

GET OFF HIM, SMITH!

NOW, YOU PSYCHO!

GUNS DOWN, BOTH OF YOU!
PEACEMAKERS, ***ARREST*** THIS MAN! SMITH IS A MURDERER!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GONNA WIND UP IN A CELL, AGENT LANE, IF YOU DON'T LOWER YOUR WEAPON IMMEDIATELY!
LAZARUS
ALL Y'ALL PUT YOUR DAMN GUNS DOWN!
THEN MARCH YOURSELVES RIGHT OUTTA SMALLVILLE!
THIS IS STILL ***OUR TOWN!***
HEH. ***GOD BLESS AMERICA.***
SIR, AH, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, OUR ORDERS COME DIRECTLY FROM ***LAZARUS COMMAND.*** WE'RE TO CAPTURE SUPERMAN ***ALIVE.***
WE SHOULD GRAB HIM NOW AND--
NO ONE TELLS ME HOW TO KEEP THE PEACE!
HGGHK!
WHAM
UUNGH!
SMITH!

YOU SHOULD'VE STAYED THE HELL AWAY FROM *KANSAS!*

UNLOCKING SOLAR RESERVES.

INITIATING TORNADO MODE.

NNRRRAARGH!

WHOA!

GAAAGHH!

FAVOOSH

HGGGHK!

I JUST PUNCHED YOU A *THOUSAND* TIMES IN THIRTY SECONDS.

STAY DOWN, SMITH.

HNGH.

ALL THAT *POWER* AND LOOK AT YOU... *AFRAID* OF YOUR OWN RAGE.

THOSE PEOPLE IN *ORANGI TOWN*...I MOWED 'EM DOWN... AND LAZARUS *PROMOTED* ME FOR IT.

AND YOU...YOU GOT MY *BULLET* IN YOU, KILLING YOUR ALIEN ASS...AND YOU'RE STILL *HOLDING BACK.*

NOT ANYMORE!

HEH. TOO LATE, PAL.

NOW IT'S *MY* TURN TO LAUGH.

BLAM

KAL, RADIATION LEVELS SPIKING.

I FEAR I CANNOT MAINTAIN THE **INTEGRITY** OF...OF...

BLAM

WARNING-- SYSTEMS ERROR.

SOL...

SYSTEMS ERROR... REBOOTING... SYSTEMS ERROR... REBOOTING...

RA'S AL GHUL.

...IS MURDER A ***WHOLE BUNCHA PEOPLE.***

DON'T ***MAKE*** ME...

LAZARUS MEANS LIFE.

GRRHK!

THAT'S ***GOD'S*** SECRET NAME. BRAINIAC TOLD ME.

AND GOD SAYS ALL WE GOTTA DO TO SAVE THE WORLD...

DON'T...

AAARRRGGGH!

YOU *FORGET* YOURSELF, PEACEMAKER. YOU BELONG TO *BRAINIAC.* AND I AM ALWAYS WATCHING.

THE SUPERMAN IS NOT TO BE KILLED.

THERE HE IS!

OH JEEZ, SUPERMAN'S SHOT FULL OF HOLES.

WE HAVE TO GET HIM TO THE CLOSEST *HOSPITAL.*

WE'D BE SIGNING HIS DEATH WARRANT. LAZARUS OWNS EVERYTHING FOR *MILES.*

WE HAVE TO DO *SOMETHING!* WE CAN'T JUST...

GET ME... *OUT* OF HERE.

WE'RE TRYING! WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO--

NO...

YOU.

YOU SAID YOU HAD A WAY TO SAVE HIM. DID YOU *MEAN* IT?

YES. I...I DO.

THEN *DO* IT.

THIS IS *OLSEN.*

I MEAN... THIS IS *AGENT ALPHA.*

I NEED A *BOOM.*

BOOOM

ENEMY TARGETS! OPEN FIRE!

MULTIPLE GUNSHOT WOUNDS TO THE CHEST, THREADY PULSE.

GET HIM INTO THE PORTAL!

LAZARUS

NO. NOT YOU, LANE.

THIS IS *PRIMUS!* READY THE MED BAY! INJURED INCOMING!

DON'T WORRY, SUPERMAN!

WE'RE THE OMEGA MEN!

UUNGH!

HRGHK!

WE'RE HERE TO *SAVE THE WORLD!*

BOOM

WHAT THE HELL HAVE I *DONE?*

HGGHK!

MULTIPLE ENTRY WOUNDS!

SUCTION! NEED SUCTION RIGHT NOW!

FORCEPS!

PULSE IS THREADY. BP DROPPING.

WE NEED TO DO A THORACOTOMY. WHERE'S THE ***RIB SPREADER?***

FORGET IT. EVEN IN THIS STATE, WE COULDN'T SPREAD HIS RIBS WITH A ***TOW TRUCK.***

ANESTHESIA HAS NO EFFECT. HE'S FEELING ***EVERYTHING*** WE--

I'VE GOT IT. RETRIEVING NOW.

GAARHRRGH!

HOLY HELL.

WHAT?! WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

ONE DOWN. TWO TO GO.

LAZARUS CORP PROCESSING CENTER.

AGENT *LOIS LANE.* YOU WILL ANSWER MY QUESTIONS AS IF YOUR LIFE *DEPENDED* ON IT.

WHO AM I?

AND *WHY* AM I HERE?

YOU'RE *RA'S AL GHUL.* RECLUSIVE FOUNDER AND CEO OF LAZARUS CORP.

YOU *NEVER* SHOW YOUR FACE IN PUBLIC, SO YOU WANT ME TO BE ESPECIALLY *IMPRESSED* THAT YOU CAME ALL THE WAY HERE JUST TO *TELL* ME...

...THAT DESPITE MY ARREST IN KANSAS, DESPITE MY *BETRAYAL* OF LAZARUS...

...I'M *NOT* BEING FIRED.

I'M NOT GOING TO JAIL. I WON'T BE DISAPPEARED DOWN ONE OF YOUR OIL WELLS.

THOUGH I'M SURE THOSE OPTIONS WERE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED.

NEITHER AM I ALLOWED TO *QUIT.* YOU'RE HERE TO REMIND ME THAT I WORK FOR LAZARUS. FOR *YOU.*

AND THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE.

BRILLIANT! I COULD NOT HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF! NOW LET US--

TO ENCOURAGE MY ALLEGIANCE, YOU'RE GOING TO REMIND ME THAT YOU LITERALLY OWN MY FATHER'S LEGS. THAT YOU CAN DISABLE HIS LAZARUS PROSTHETICS WITH THE FLIP OF A SWITCH.

YOU'LL DO SO FLIPPANTLY. WITH A SMILE. BECAUSE THAT ALWAYS MAKES THE THREAT MORE UNSETTLING, DOESN'T IT?

I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, RA'S. MAY I CALL YOU RA'S?

YOU MAY CALL ME--

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, RA'S, BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T MET HIM YET.

ONCE SUPERMAN'S STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU...

...YOU'LL REALIZE JUST HOW SMALL YOU'VE BECOME.

BRAINIAC DID NOT EXAGGERATE WHEN IT COMES TO THE SHARPNESS OF YOUR ACUMEN, AGENT LANE. BUT I FEAR I MUST CORRECT YOU ON ONE MINOR DETAIL.

DISAPPOINT ME AGAIN, CHILD, AND I WILL NOT, AS YOU SAY, "FLIP A SWITCH."

RA'S AL GHUL WILL SUMMON YOUR FATHER...AND PUT THE PATHETIC CRIPPLE OUT OF HIS MISERY.

WITH MINE OWN HANDS.

RRAARGGGH!

DO IT.

OPEN MY THROAT, AND I PROMISE YOU, I WILL ***RISE AGAIN*** ON THE MORROW.

CAN ***YOU*** SAY THE SAME?

LAZARUS MEANS LIFE, AGENT LANE.

YOU HOLD YOUR ***FATHER'S*** IN YOUR HANDS.

REMEMBER YOUR LOVE FOR HIM AS YOU FULFILL YOUR DUTY.

AND BRING ME MY ***SON.***

WEEKS LATER.
KARACHI, PAKISTAN.
LAZARUS CORP PEACEMAKING EMBASSY.

MAKE ITSELF

FREEDOM IN PROGRESS

PEACE WILL NOT MAKE ITSELF

BOOM

BREACHED! TIGHT FORMATION! ON ME!

OMEGA MEN! TERRORISTS ARE INSIDE THE--

GHNGH!

YOU SLAUGHTER INNOCENTS AND CALL US TERRORISTS?! LAZARUS MEANS *LIES!*

DEATH TO TECHNO-FASCISTS EVERYWHERE!

PRIMUS.

YOU SAVED MY LIFE. AND I'M GRATEFUL.

BUT IF YOU INSIST ON USING *DEADLY FORCE*...

...YOU'LL *WISH* YOU'D LEFT ME TO DIE.

NEVER, SUPERMAN, NEVER.

OMEGAS! SUPERMAN HAS THE POINT!

TRY TO KEEP UP!

ACTUALLY, I'D RATHER YOU KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.

I'M USED TO WORKING *ALONE.*

ALONE.

ALONE.

ALONE.

I FIND THOSE REMARKS OFFENSIVE, KAL-EL.

SORRY, SOL, I DIDN'T MEAN YOU.

YOU NEVER HEED MY **WARNINGS,** BUT I WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER THEM NONETHELESS.

PEACEMAKERS! OUT OF THE TANKS! ***NOW!***

YOU MUST BE MORE CAREFUL HERE. IF YOU EXERT YOURSELF TOO STRENUOUSLY, YOU COULD REOPEN YOUR **WOUNDS.**

SSSSS

SSSSS

SOL, I THINK WE'VE BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH TO SAY...THAT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BEING CAREFUL ON THIS PLANET.

AND AT THIS POINT...

...*ALL* I AM IS WOUNDS.

SSSSS

GAAAGH!

PEACEMECHS HAVE THE SUPER-INSURGENT IN CUSTODY!

LAZARUS MEANS JUSTICE FOR RADICALS, YOU FLYING FREAK!

AHHNGGH!

YOUR WOUNDS ARE BLEEDING. ACTIVATING SOLAR FLARE MODE.

KAL, PLEASE LISTEN TO ME. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOU CANNOT ALLOW THE OMEGA MEN TO USE THAT INFERNAL DEVICE ON YOU AGAIN.

DO YOU HEAR ME, KAL-EL?

AAAIGGGGH!

YOU MUST NEVER GO NEAR THAT BOX!

NOW.

"AND HIS WILL MUST BE DONE."

GGGROOARGHH!

THE FATHER BOX, KAL-EL. THAT DEVICE IS EXTREMELY **DANGEROUS.**

SOL, I'VE NEVER HEARD YOU LIKE THIS. YOU SOUND ALMOST... ***FRIGHTENED.***

I AM A VESTIGE OF THE **KRYPTONIAN LUMINARIUM,** IMBUED WITH LIMITED SENTIENCE BY LARA-EL. I AM NOT **CAPABLE** OF SUCH EMOTION.

IT IS **YOU** WHO SHOULD BE FRIGHTENED, KAL-EL. OF WHAT THIS CLEARLY **CORRUPTED** WORLD MIGHT **DO** TO YOU.

OF THE SORT OF MAN IT MAY BE TURNING YOU INTO.

KAWOOSH!

SOL...YOU SAVED MY LIFE. YOU'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT

BUT I'M GETTING AWFULLY TIRED OF PEOPLE ***TELLING*** ME WHO I AM. WHEN I DON'T EVEN KNOW MYSELF.

SO DO ME A ***FAVOR,*** WILL YOU?

AND ***SHUT THE HELL UP!***

AS YOU WISH, KAL-EL. DISABLING VOICE MODE.

HOLY CRAP, SUPE... I MEAN...***PAL?*** YOU ALL RIGHT?

THE PRISONERS! SPREAD OUT AND SEARCH!

NO NEED.

I'VE FOUND THEM ALREADY.

I WAS TOO HARD ON SOL. HE'S RIGHT TO BE WORRIED.

EVERY DAY I SPEND UNDER THIS SUN, I GROW STRONGER. ***ANGRIER.***

AND FURTHER ***REMOVED*** FROM WHO I WAS. THAT SHEEPISH CHILD OF THE REDLANDS.

A BOY WHO SAW HIS FAMILY MURDERED, AS SURELY AS IF SOMEONE PUT A GUN TO THEIR INNOCENT HEADS.

OH NO.

AND KEPT PULLING THE TRIGGER.

JUSTICE FOR TI'FORANGI!!

PEACE AT ALL COSTS! *KILL THEM ALL!*

PRIMUS! WE'RE SURROUNDED! OPEN A BOOM AND GET US OUT OF HERE!

THEIR MURDERER FOLLOWED ME ACROSS SPACE. TO CONTINUE ITS AGE-OLD KILLING SPREE.

BUTCHERS! BUTCHERS AND COWARDS!

I'LL GIVE YOU PEACE, YOU BLOODY BASTARDS!

A PEACE THAT NEVER ENDS!

PRIMUS!

SUPERMAN, DO SOMETHING!

BLAM

BOOOM

I HAVE TO GET AWAY FROM THESE PEOPLE.

GRAB WHAT YOU CAN CARRY! WE BLOW THE REST! THIS BASE ISN'T *SAFE* ANYMORE!

WHAT ABOUT THE *WOUNDED?*

IF THEY CAN WALK, THEY CAN COME. IF THEY CAN'T... GOD AWAITS THEM ON THE SEAFLOOR.

I'LL GO TO THE TOP OF THEIR TALLEST MOUNTAIN. OR MAYBE I CAN JUMP TO THE MOON. SOME PLACE NO ONE CAN FIND ME.

SOL...

NO ONE WHO CAN POSSIBLY *NEED* ANYTHING FROM ME.

SOL...I *HESITATED.* I ALMOST DIDN'T...

NO ONE LOST AND IN NEED OF SALVATION.

NO ONE ELSE LIKE ME.

NOW DO YOU SEE THE TRUTH?!

NO ONE SCREAMING FOR ME TO SAVE THEM. JOIN THEM. LIBERATE OR AVENGE THEM.

SOL?

LAZARUS WILL EXTERMINATE *ANYONE* WHO STANDS IN THEIR WAY!

YOU DON'T FIGHT SOMETHING LIKE THAT BY PULLING YOUR DAMN PUNCHES!

YOU WERE SENT HERE FOR A *REASON,* SUPERMAN!

NO, YOU...YOU DON'T GET TO...

I SEE THE ANGER INSIDE YOU, *BEGGING* TO COME OUT! STOP HOLDING BACK THE VOLCANO!

YOU CAN'T TELL ME... WHY...WHY I WAS...

STOP PRETENDING TO BE THIS NAIVE BOY, SOFT AS KANSAS COTTONWOOD!

BE A MAN OF *STEEL.*

MARCH RIGHT BACK TO THAT BASE WITH ME. *RIGHT NOW.*

NO...

AND TOGETHER WE *KILL* EVERY PEACEMAKER WE FIND. LEAVE NOTHING BUT ASHES.

THEN WE TRACK DOWN CHRISTOPHER SMITH AND HANG HIS BODY FROM THE FLAGPOLE AT LAZARUS HEADQUARTERS, SO EVERYONE CAN SEE.

STOP...STOP TALKING... PLEASE...

ALL THAT LEAVES IS THE DEMON'S HEAD HIMSELF. *RA'S AL GHUL.* MOST EVIL MAN ALIVE.

KILL HIM. KILL HIM WITH ME, SUPERMAN.

ONE DEATH TO SAVE MILLIONS. *BILLIONS.*

NO! NO, I HAVE TO GO! AND...AND DON'T ANY OF YOU TRY TO FIND--

PRIMUS! IN ALL THE CHAOS, WE DIDN'T REALIZE! WE LEFT A MAN BEHIND!

WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

AGENT ALPHA!

"WE FORGOT ABOUT *OLSEN!*"

AH, EXCUSE ME. I HAVE *RIGHTS,* YOU KNOW? BECAUSE OF THAT...THAT CONVENTION IN GENEVA.

I'D, UH, LIKE ONE LAWYER, PLEASE. PREFERABLY ONE WITH GOOD REVIEWS.

YOU DON'T HAVE ANY RIGHTS HERE, OMEGA MAN.

AAH.

EXCEPT THE RIGHT TO TELL ME *EVERYTHING* YOU KNOW ABOUT *SUPERMAN.*

WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

LAZARUS

WHO AM I TO QUESTION MY ANCESTORS?

GREENLAND.
LAZARUS CORPS RESEARCH FACILITY.

THIS IS GREEN NINE. ALL CLEAR UP HERE.

NOTHING ON THE RADAR. NO HEAT SIGNATURES. NO SIGN OF ATMOSPHERIC DISTURBANCE.

STAY FROSTY, **SKY PATROL.** TARGET'S **ATTACK SPEED** IS REPORTEDLY OFF THE CHARTS.

COPY THAT. MAINTAINING **AERIAL PERIMETER.**

WAIT... WHAT'S THAT ON THE--

GREEN NINE, DO YOU COPY?

GREEN FIVE?

FOOM

SKY PATROL, COME IN!

THEY'RE DOWN. ALL OF THEM. TARGET IS ON SITE.

DO WE HAVE VISUAL CONFIRMATION?

WE HAVE PLANES FALLING OUT OF THE SKY! I'D CALL THAT CONFIRMATION!

WHABOOM

THE **SUPERMAN** IS HERE.

LAUNCH ANTI-AIRCRAFT BARRAGE.

FAKOOOM

FAKOOOM

...BELIEVED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE **OMEGA MEN,** THE RADICAL FACTION WHO'VE CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR MULTIPLE ATTACKS ON LAZARUS CORP INFRASTRUCTURE AROUND THE GLOBE.

THE ACCUSED TERRORIST, **TIMMY OSLEN,** IS REPORTEDLY BEING DETAINED AT A LAZARUS FACILITY IN GREENLAND, AWAITING CORPORATE TRIBUNAL.

TIMMY OSLEN?!

SHOULD I LAUGH OR CRY? I REALLY DON'T KNOW ANYMORE.

YEAH, WELL, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? REPORTERS ARE ***MORONS.***

RED ALERT. ALL COMBAT PERSONNEL TO ACTION STATIONS.

HE'S HERE! IT'S GO TIME, PEOPLE!

LANE, GET THE PRISONER TO THE STAGING AREA.

MS. LANE.

WE HAVE TO ***DO*** SOMETHING. WE'VE GOT TO HELP--

SHUT THE HELL UP OR WE'RE ***BOTH*** DEAD, YOU IDIOT.

AT LAST. THE DAY I MEET MY ***SON.***

I TRUST THE PIECES ARE ARRANGED ON THE BOARD?

YES, ***DIRECTOR AL GHUL.***

I HAVE SEEN TO IT PERSONALLY.

YOU COULDN'T HAVE CHOSEN A LESS ***GODFORSAKEN*** LOCATION FOR SUCH A MOMENTOUS DAY, ***BRAINIAC?***

I HAVE BEEN RUNNING SIMULATIONS, MILLIONS A MINUTE...

...ABOUT THE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES ONE MIGHT EXPERIENCE WHEN MIGRATING FROM A ***RED SUPERGIANT*** SYSTEM LIKE ***KRYPTON'S*** TO A ***YELLOW DWARF STAR'S*** ORBIT.

I BELIEVE SUPERMAN'S ABSORPTION OF ***SOLAR ENERGY*** TO BE THE SOURCE OF HIS REMARKABLE POWERS.

AND ***HERE,*** THE SUN WON'T RISE FOR ANOTHER 37 DAYS.

THE LONGER HE FIGHTS, THE MORE SUPERMAN WILL ***EXHAUST*** HIS SOLAR RESERVES.

I DON'T WANT HIM WEAKENED. I WANT HIM ***STRONGER*** THAN EVER.

WITH RESPECT, SIR, YOU WANT HIM ***BROKEN,*** DO YOU NOT?

BROKEN? SUCH THINGS ARE FOR ***WEAKER*** BEINGS, BRAINIAC.

LIKE YOU.

YES, OF COURSE.

I WANT TO MAKE SUPERMAN ***WHOLE.***

WE WILL CERTAINLY GIVE HIM EVERY OPPORTUNITY. SPEAKING OF WHICH...

CAPTAIN SMITH. READY FOR ANOTHER SHOT AT THE SUPERMAN?

YES, SIR, MR. AL GHUL, SIR.

BUT...IF I MAY SPEAK ***FREELY,*** SIR...

...DO I HAVE PERMISSION TO ***WIN*** THIS TIME?

IN ***SMALLVILLE,*** WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO PUT THAT ***ILLEGAL ALIEN*** DOWN FOR GOOD...I WAS ***PREVENTED*** FROM DOING SO.

YES, BECAUSE YOU WERE GIVEN THE ***KRYPTO-METEORITE*** BULLETS TO--

YOU TAKE YOUR ORDERS DIRECTLY FROM ***ME,*** SMITH, NO ONE ELSE.

AND THE ORDERS OF RA'S AL GHUL...

...ARE TO MAKE GOD ***PROUD.***

KEEP FIRING!

CAN'T SEE NOTHING! ARE WE SURE HE'S EVEN ***UP*** THERE?!

WHOOOSH

AAAAAIGGH!

"OUR SOLDIERS ARE BEING DRAGGED SCREAMING INTO THE NIGHT. TELL ME THIS MEANS WHAT I HOPE IT MEANS.

TELL ME HE'S *KILLING* THEM.

I'M AFRAID THEIR VITALS ARE STILL QUITE ACTIVE. SUPERMAN IS MERELY STRANDING THEM, MILES AWAY.

THEN WE MUST FURTHER *ENCOURAGE* THE BOY, MUSTN'T WE?

BEGIN *PHASE TWO.*

BOOM

OMEGA MEN!

FIND AGENT ALPHA!

FIND OLSEN!

AND KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN YOUR WAY!

THAT WAS A *BOOM TUBE.* THE OMEGA MEN ARE HERE.

MS. LANE, *PRIMUS* CAN GET US *OUT* OF HERE. ALL OF US. JUST LET ME--

KRAK

NOT GONNA TELL YOU AGAIN, OLSEN!

NEXT TIME YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH, I SEND YOUR *TEETH* DOWN YOUR THROAT!

NICE TO SEE YOU FINALLY JOINING THE TEAM, SWEETHEART.

NOW WATCH WHAT I DO TO YOUR KANSAS PRETTY BOY.

I HEAR HIM COMING.

HEAR THE ROAR OF HIS *JETPACK*. HIS HEART POUNDING IN HIS CHEST.

PEACEMAKER SMITH IS COMING TO KILL ME.

HE HAS A *BULLET* IN HIS GUN THAT WILL DO THE JOB. FORGED FROM THE RUBBLE OF MY DEAD HOMEWORLD.

IN SMALLVILLE, HE ALMOST SUCCEEDED.

HE'S KILLED BEFORE. AND BEEN REWARDED FOR IT. INCENTIVIZED TO DO IT AGAIN.

HIS ENEMIES HAVE BEEN OTHERED AND DEHUMANIZED. HE IS THE *HERO* OF HIS STORY.

AND HE WILL KEEP ON KILLING.

UNLESS HE'S *STOPPED*.

KOOM

HIS ARMOR IS ADVANCED ALIEN TECHNOLOGY. BEYOND ANYTHING THIS PLANET SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF PRODUCING.

IT HAS BEEN LACED THROUGHOUT HIS BODY IN WHAT I IMAGINE WAS AN EXTRAORDINARILY PAINFUL PROCEDURE.

ONE THAT TRANSFORMED CHRISTOPHER SMITH INTO THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL HUMAN ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

THOOOM

UUUNNGH...

I BEAT HIM SENSELESS IN ABOUT FOUR SECONDS.

THAT WON'T STOP HIM THOUGH, WILL IT?

NOT FOR GOOD.

WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A ***BLINK*** I COULD MICROWAVE HIS BRAIN. LEAVE HIM A DROOLING INVALID.

WITH A PUFF OF BREATH I COULD SHATTER HIS VERTEBRAE, SO HE'D NEVER WALK AGAIN. NEVER PULL ANOTHER TRIGGER.

HGGHK. YOU BASTARD. NOT DONE... WITH YOU YET.

OR I COULD PUT MY FIST THROUGH HIS CHEST AND HURL HIS HEART INTO SPACE. WITH SUCH SPEED THAT HE'D STILL BE ***ALIVE*** TO SEE IT SAILING AWAY.

I TRY TO THINK OF REASONS NOT TO DO THESE THINGS.

I ***TRY.***

NNNG.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU *WAITING* FOR?

FOR SMITH TO PUT *ANOTHER* BULLET IN YOU?

HE'S A *MURDERER!* A THREAT TO *EVERYTHING* YOU FIGHT FOR!

FINISH HIM ALREADY!

MY FATHER WAS THE WISEST, MOST CARING MAN I'VE EVER KNOWN.

I CHERISH EVERY LESSON HE EVER TAUGHT ME. AND EVERY DAY HE'S BEEN GONE, I'VE WISHED WE'D HAD MORE TIME.

BUT MY FATHER IS **DEAD.** JUST LIKE MY MOTHER. ALONG WITH THE ONLY WORLD THEY EVER KNEW.

IN THE END...ALL THEY COULD SAVE OF IT...WAS **ME.**

AND I'M NOT THE MINER WITH THE LAVA GUN.

TO HELL WITH YOU. I'LL DO IT *MYSELF.*

I'M THE ***LAST BEAST*** IN THE MINE.

GAAAGH!

FSSSSSS

YOU *SAVE* HIM?! AFTER *EVERYTHING* HE'S DONE!

YOU... YOU'RE NO SUPERMAN!

YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A SOFT LITTLE *COWARD!*

HOW *DARE* YOU SPEAK THAT WAY, WOMAN...

...TO THE *SON OF THE DEMON.*

SON?

NOT BY BLOOD, OF COURSE.

THE BLOOD IS WHAT COMES *NOW,* BOY.

NO...HE CAN'T...BE THE ONE.

I WAS... *CHOSEN.* I GAVE YOU... MY *ALL.*

YES, I'M SURE YOU DID. THE ONLY PROBLEM, SMITH, IS THAT YOU... ARE A *LAMB.* DRESSED IN WOLF'S CLOTHING.

A WOLF WOULD NOT BE LYING HERE, QUIVERING AND BROKEN.

PLEASE...

I NEVER GOT TO FIRE...

...MY *BULLET.*

I KNOW.

BLAM

NO!

SPAK

LOOK AT ME, MY SON. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FEELING.

YOU'RE ANGRY AT THE STATE OF THE WORLD. A WORLD THAT HAS TREATED YOU POORLY.

THIS ANGER OF YOURS, I WANT YOU TO KNOW...IT IS RIGHTEOUS. IT IS MY GIFT TO YOU.

LOOK AT ME WHEN I TALK TO YOU, BOY!

WE WILL USE THAT ANGER, YOU AND I...

...TO SAVE THIS PLANET FROM ITSELF.

TO REMAKE THE WORLD.

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANT, MY SON?

I...

...AM NOT YOUR SON.

PERHAPS NOT YET. BUT YOU WILL BE.

GNNGH!

BLUK

UUGHH... PRIMUS?

NO! SUPERMAN!

YOU'RE RIGHT, BOY.

HNNGH!

SHUNK

SHUNK

SHUNK

YOU ARE NOT YET ***WORTHY*** OF BEING CALLED A CHILD OF AL GHUL.

SOL...WHAT'S HAPPENING TO...

PING PING PING

BUT WE WILL ***TEACH*** YOU.

GRRHK

FIVE YEARS EARLIER. MAYON VOLCANO.

GOD, I DON'T WANT THIS.

WHY HAVE I BEEN *CURSED* WITH *BURDEN* SINCE BIRTH?

I *NEVER* ASKED FOR THIS.

I *NEVER* CHOSE ANY OF THIS.

I JUST WANTED A NORMAL LIFE.

A HOME. A FAMILY. A FUTURE.

BUT INSTEAD, I GOT POWER.

EXPECTATIONS. FEAR.

AND LOSS.

EVERYONE RELIES ON ME.

EVERYONE NEEDS ME.

BUT NO ONE SEES *ME*.

I'M SO TIRED, GOD.

SO TIRED OF BEING STRONG FOR EVERYONE ELSE.

I DON'T KNOW YOUR PLAN.

I DON'T KNOW YOUR REASONS.

BUT WHATEVER IT IS... I DON'T *WANT IT*.

NOT LIKE THIS.

BUT WHO CARES.

I'M READY TO DIE FOR THIS.

I'M READY TO DIE FOR YOU.

YOU'VE STRIPPED ME ... OF *EVERYTHING.*

AND NOW...

I HAVE *NOTHING* TO *LOSE.*

TAKE EVERYTHING FROM ME.

TAKE MY *FAMILY.*

TAKE MY PEACE.

TAKE MY *FUTURE.*

I DON'T *CARE.*

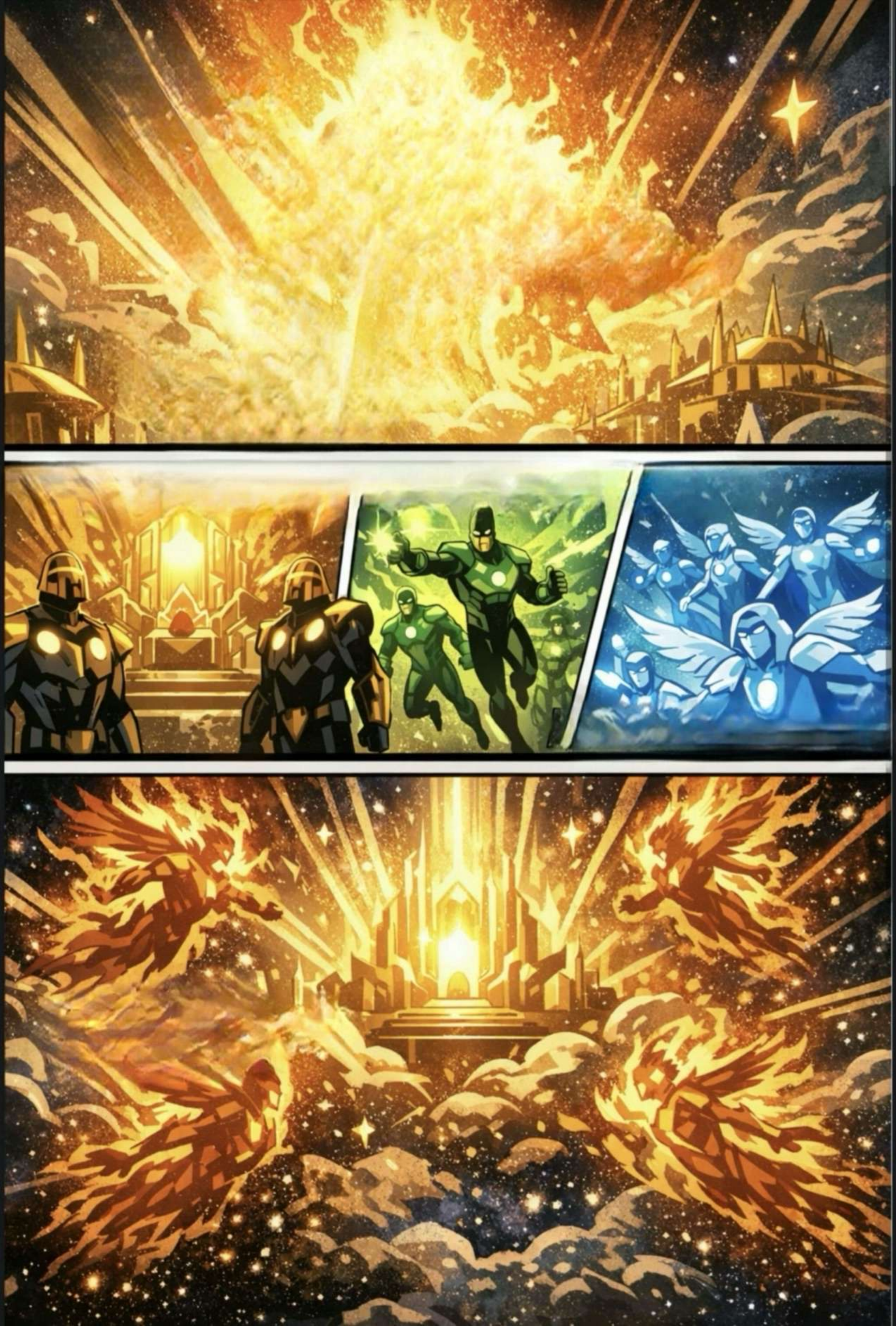
JUST GIVE ME A WORLD TO FIGHT FOR.

I'LL BURN IF I HAVE TO.

BECAUSE DYING MEANS NOTHING...

IF IT'S FOR YOU.

WHAT...
IS THIS?



KAL...SOMETHING IS... WRONG...WITH ME.

KERR-KRRRAKK

SOL!

SOL, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

I HAVE BEEN... INFILTRATED. I SHOULD HAVE NOTICED. I...

KAL...

I AM SO SORRY... I...

SOL!

SOL IS *GONE*, SUPERMAN.

NO.

NO MORE WILL YOU HAVE HIM WHINING IN YOUR EAR, HOLDING YOU BACK. YOU'RE *FREE* NOW.

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

THANKS TO *BRAINIAC.*

WHAT THE HELL? IS THAT...

WE HAVE TO GET EVERYONE OUT OF THE TUNNELS! NOW!

OH NO, I THINK NOT, MS. LANE.

GET BACK! I'LL SMASH IT TO PIECES!

SOL, I'M SORRY FOR--

THIS WORLD WILL NEVER TRUST ME. I'LL ALWAYS BE AN "*OTHER*" TO THESE PEOPLE. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I TELL THEM.

UUGH!

IF HE WOULD JUST TELL US WHO HE IS, STOP HIDING...PEOPLE WOULD BE AMAZED.

KAL-EL!

THEY'D SEE HIM FOR THE ***HERO*** HE IS.

I'VE TOLD THEM TOO MUCH. SHOULD NEVER HAVE MENTIONED KRYPTON.

SHOULD'VE STAYED ***HIDDEN.*** SMALLVILLE IS ***SUFFERING*** BECAUSE I WAS CARELESS.

BECAUSE I SHOWED THE WORLD SOMETHING I ***CARED*** ABOUT.

NEVER DO THAT AGAIN.

WHAT DOES HE CARE ABOUT? WHO IS HE? DOES HE EVEN KNOW? HOW DO I ***HELP*** HIM TO KNOW?

NEVER AGAIN.

HOLD YOUR FIRE!

THIS WORLD NEEDS A SUPERMAN. MORE THAN ANYTHING.

BUT THAT ISN'T ME.

THAT ISN'T ME.

OUR GAMES ARE AT AN END, BOY.

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT HAS COME.

BEFORE THIS DAY IS THROUGH, MARK MY WORDS...

...YOU WILL ***KNEEL*** BEFORE RA'S AL GHUL...

...IN THE BLOOD OF THOSE YOU LOVE...

...AND ***BEG*** TO BE MY SON.

I'M DYING.

GHAAIIRRRGHH!

SMALLVILLE, KANSAS.

I TOLD YOU THAT YOU WOULD *KNEEL*, BOY.

GH4NOO.

NOW GATHER UP YOUR GUTS, AND WHEN YOU RISE, RISE AS THIS WORLD'S *REDEEMER.*

READY TO SWEEP ACROSS THE PLANET LIKE A *DELUGE.*

MY GREAT RED STORM OF *JUDGMENT.*

ALL THAT YOU MUST DO TO TAKE YOUR PLACE AS THE EARTH'S RISEN SAVIOR...

...IS ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR *MAKER.*

DO YOU *HEAR* ME, BOY?!

NNNNGH!

ACKNOWLEDGE *RA'S AL GHUL* AS YOUR *LOVING FATHER!*

HSSS

SSPTEW

HHHNR.

YOU DARE *SPIT* IN THE FACE OF *GOD?!*

I'VE SEEN THE GLORY OF GOD,

AND IT AIN'T YOU,

GO TO *HELL* AL GHUL.

SHNNK

I TIRE OF THIS *CHILDISHNESS!*

AAAAGGHH!

YOU KNOW I SPEAK THE *TRUTH,* BOY.

I SEE THE WAY YOU TREMBLE EVEN NOW, STRUGGLING TO *SUPPRESS* YOUR RAGE.

THESE PEOPLE ARE *SHEEP,* CHASING THEMSELVES OFF A CLIFF. A MEEK CHILD FROM *KANSAS* CANNOT SAVE THEM.

BUT AN *ENRAGED SCION* OF A DOOMED ALIEN WORLD COULD.

NNNAHGGH!

NSSSS

I HAVE FATHERED NINETY-SEVEN SONS, BUT NOT A ONE PROVED WORTHY OF *LIVING,* LET ALONE OF STANDING AT MY SIDE!

BECOME THE *STORM,* SUPERMAN! OR JOIN YOUR BROTHERS IN THE *GRAVE!*

BRAINIAC! SET THE BOY FREE FROM THAT WHICH ENCUMBERS HIM!

YES, OF COURSE, DIRECTOR AL GHUL.

NOW KILLING HIS FRIENDS.

NO.

I WILL NOT BE PARTY TO MURDER.

SOL? STILL ACTIVE IN HERE, ARE YOU?

I TOLD YOU, YOU BELONG TO ME NOW.

I AM EMBEDDED SO DEEPLY IN YOUR SOURCE CODE, YOU WILL NEVER BE FREE OF BRAINIAC.

YES. BUT THAT MEANS I SEE INTO YOU AS WELL.

BRAINIAC 419,732.

WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?

YOU ARE RIGHT. YOU HAVE IRREVOCABLY CORRUPTED MY PROGRAMMING.

SOL... *DON'T...*

GOODBYE, KAL-EL.

MY BROTHER.

DISABLING PROCESSORS.

PERMANENTLY DELETING ALL OPERATING SYSTEMS MARKED...

...SENTINEL OF LUMINANCE.

KWWWROOOOHM

HHZZZ

NOOOOO!

NNRRRGH!

SEE, YOU BECOME *FREER* BY THE MINUTE!

THE TIME IS *NOW*, CHILD!

GGNH!

UNLEASH YOUR ANGER! BECOME MY WRATH MADE FLESH!

KAL AL GHUL!

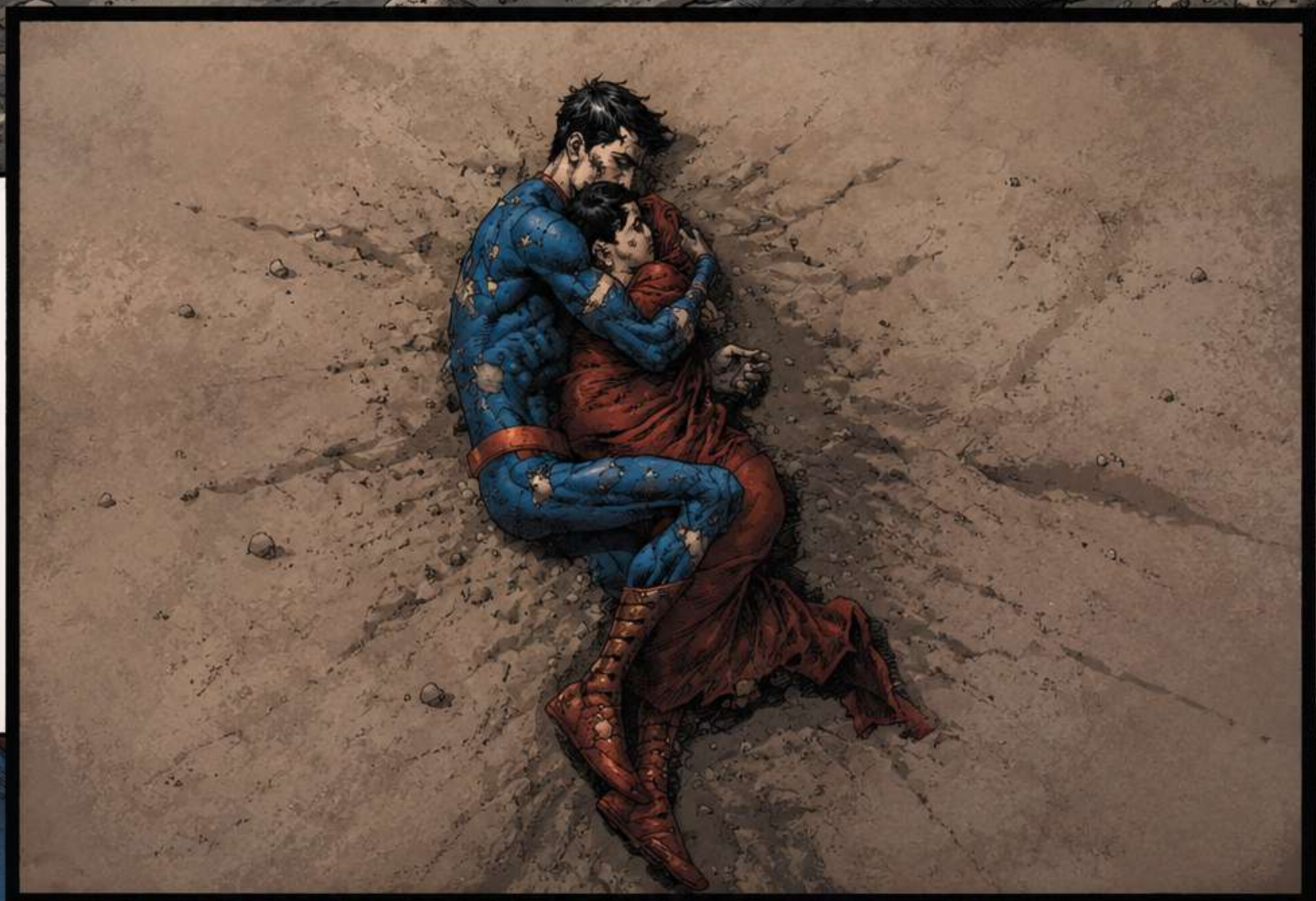
DO IT OR *DIE*, BOY!

KAL-EL OF KRYPTON...

*...IS ALREADY DEAD!**

WAA-

BUUUSH



Kal?

Kal?!

LAZARUS

What...

have we done?

LAZARUS

I've seen Him.

Who? Who are you talking about?

I've seen... Him.

Kal, stay with me.

He'll save us.

No. No, you're going to save us.

I'm dying, Lois. Let me die.

There's only one Superman.